



Energy Crunch May Mean More Fires in the Home

With fuel prices skyrocketing, fire safety experts fear another spike in fires involving home heating equipment. There was a shocking jump of 60,000 home-heating fires between 1979 and 1980, mostly associated with a switch to wood stoves and the use of fireplaces.



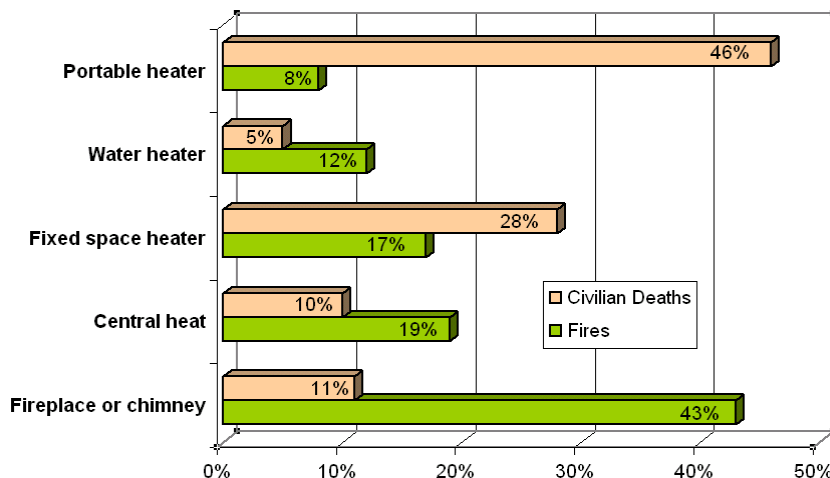
Even without considering the possible effects of an energy crunch:

- **Heating equipment is a leading cause of home fires during the months of December, January, and February**, and trails only cooking equipment as a cause of home fires year-round.
- Space heaters were involved in 25% of the home heating fires and 74% of the deaths.

Listed below are the leading causes of home fires by method of heating:

- **Space heaters** – Ignition of combustibles left too close to the heater.
- **Wood stoves or fireplaces** – Creosote build-up.
- **Fixed electric space heaters** – Leaving the equipment unattended.

Home Heating Equipment Fires by Type of Equipment Involved: 1999-2002



Source: Fire statistics were derived from NFPA's annual fire department survey. Detailed statistics were derived by NFPA from the U.S. Fire Administration's National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) and NFPA's fire department survey.



Home heating safety rules and recommendations:

- After installing a new unit, have a qualified technician inspect it.
- Have an annual professional inspection of the chimney and other related equipment of wood or coal stoves and fireplaces, and have them cleaned according to the inspection results.
- Fuel completely-cooled, portable kerosene heaters in a well-ventilated area away from flames, such as pilot lights and other heat sources. *Never use gasoline.*
- Keep space heaters at least 3 feet away from combustibles.
- When buying heaters, choose devices with automatic shut-off features.
- Make sure any gas-fueled heating device is adequately ventilated.
- Turn portable space heaters off every time you leave a room or go to bed.
- Allow ashes to cool before disposing of them in a metal container.

