

# ***Senior Population Extremely Vulnerable During the Winter Season***

The Philadelphia Fire Department encourages residents to be extra diligent about fire safety during the cold spell. Citizens age 50 and over continue to be the most affected by fatal fire in the City of Philadelphia; a startling statistic has revealed that 75% of all fire fatalities during the last year occurred in the older adult population.

In 2013, six (6) citizens were killed in fires caused by extension cords, six (6) citizens were killed in fires caused by smoking and four (4) citizens were killed in fires caused by cooking.

Fire Commissioner Lloyd Ayers urges all Philadelphians to practice these important safety tips during the winter season and to be more vigilant with their fire safety efforts and awareness.

## **Look After Elderly Relatives and Neighbors**

- Check their smoke alarms to protect their lives.
- Ensure that they are warm but make sure they understand the following tips;

## **Smoke Alarm Maintenance**

- Have a smoke alarm on every level of your home.
- If you haven't checked your smoke alarms recently, check them now and then test weekly.
- Vacuum smoke alarms to remove dirt and dust particles that could hinder their performance.

## **Carbon Monoxide (CO) Alarm Maintenance**

- Have a CO alarm near each of the sleeping areas of your home.
- If you haven't checked your CO alarms recently, check them now and then test weekly.

## **Electrical Wiring**

- Check for frayed electrical cords.
- Never repair an electrical cord. Discard it and buy a new one.
- Never overload electrical outlets or extension cords.

## **Use of Heaters**

- Keep combustible materials such as newspapers or clothes at least 3 feet (36 inches) away from portable heaters.
- Never place portable heaters at the bottom of the stairway. This will block the escape route in the event of a fire.
- For portable electric heaters, check cords for cracks, breaks or loose connections.
- Electric heaters must be plugged directly into wall outlets.
- Shut-off heaters while sleeping and when you leave the home.

### **For Portable Kerosene Heaters**

- Use only approved K-1 kerosene, never gasoline!
- Never fill or refill kerosene heaters indoors.
- Avoid overfilling heater.
- Do not top off the fuel tank. Kerosene expands when it warms and will overflow.
- Never store kerosene or other flammable liquids indoors.

### **During Freezing Temperatures**

- Never use stovetops or ovens to heat your home.
- Know how to get out of your home in case of emergencies. Ensure windows and doors are in working order.
- Make sure everyone in your home knows what to do in case of an emergency.
- Avoid trying to thaw frozen pipes with a blow torch or other open flame. Use hot water or a device specifically designed for thawing pipes.
- “Take Smoking Outside.” Periods of cold weather are not a reason to change this rule.
- Remember your commitment to fire safety. Now is not the time to relax or be careless with fire. In fact, special care should be taken around fire during freezing temperatures.

**REMEMBER, In Case of EMERGENCY- dial 911. For non-emergencies or questions regarding cold weather issues, dial 311.**