



**Virginia Department of Fire Programs**  
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# MEDIA ALERT

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Prevent Fires and Protect Your Family During Home Fire Season** *- Fatal Home Fires Increase During Cooler Months -*

**RICHMOND, VIRGINIA:** – A recent report from the United States Fire Administration (USFA) revealed that fatal home fires increased 68 percent during cooler months last year. In addition to the increased home fires, the USFA also reported a rise in the number of people killed, compared to the warmer months during this period.

With home fire season upon us, now is the time for Virginia residents to prepare for the unthinkable to make this season safer. The Virginia Department of Fire Programs suggest all households direct their attention to [cooking practices](#) and [heating safety](#). The categories, according to data from the [Virginia Fire Incident Reporting System](#), were the two highest-ranking known causes of residential structure fires in 2007.

Prevent fires and protect your loved ones during home fire season with the following cooking and heating-related safety tips:

### **Cooking – [Watch What you Heat](#)**

- The leading cause of fires in the kitchen is unattended cooking. Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period, turn off the stove.

### **Heating - [Keep Fireplaces and Wood Stoves Clean](#)**

- Have your chimney or wood stove inspected and cleaned annually by a certified chimney specialist.
- Clear the area around the hearth of debris, decorations and flammable materials.

- Kerosene heaters may not be permitted in certain areas. If you use a kerosene heater, use only the recommended fuel. Always refuel outdoors safely away from your home. Allow the heater to cool before refueling and only refuel outdoors.
- Just like its name, space heaters need space. Remember to keep all combustibles at least three feet away from each heater. When buying a space heater, look for control features, such as automatic shut-off and tip-over shut-off.

#### [Protecting the Inside/Outside of Your Home](#)

- Stack firewood outdoors at least 30 feet away from your home.
- Keep the roof clear of leaves, pine needles and other debris.
- Cover the chimney with a mesh screen spark arrester.
- Remove branches hanging above the chimney, flues or vents.
- Install [smoke alarms](#) on every level of your home. Test them monthly and change the batteries at least twice a year. Consider installing the new long life smoke alarms.
- Provide proper venting systems for all heating equipment.

#### **About VDFP**

The Virginia Department of Fire Programs (VDFP) provides support services to approximately 797 fire and emergency service organizations and over 70,000 firefighters in the Commonwealth. Support areas include funding, professional development, public fire and life safety education/awareness, research, operational support, advocacy, and technical assistance. For more information on VDFP, please click [here](#).

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