

# Homes



## Time for warmth

Pixabay

### Stay safe when you turn up the heat

By CHARLES H. FEATHERSTONE  
Staff Writer

MOSES LAKE — It's autumn, and the cold has arrived. At some point soon, there will even be snow on the ground.

Which means you are likely going to turn on the furnace, light a fire, and maybe even plug in a space heater to stay warm.

According to Grant County Fire Marshal Derek Beach, all of those could cause trouble if they aren't properly used, maintained or cleaned.

For those with a fireplace or a wood-burning stove, Beach said it's important to be sure the chimney or flue is clean and free of debris. It's best to clean these

things every year whether they need it or not, he said.

"Ideally you would do that early fall, or late summer, so the weather isn't too bad," he said.

Also, things can come to live in your chimney — birds, and even squirrels,

"It's not common, but it's nothing too odd," said Grant County Fire Marshal Derek Beach. "You have people that end up with a squirrel in there."

If you find a squirrel living in your chimney, you should call a pest control professional to handle it. However, critters and vermin aside, Beach said the greatest and most common problem is the buildup of creosote, complex chemicals created by the burning of wood.

Creosote can build up on the inside of chimney or flue, creating a fire hazard, Beach said. Preventing it requires burning dry wood in your fireplace or wood stove, as opposed to green wood, he added.

"The creosote can potentially light itself, and that's how you end up with a chimney fire, or a fire inside the pipe," he said.

Beach recommends using a flashlight to look up and examine a chimney or flue at least once a year, and buying a specialized cleaning brush to scrub the chimney out.

"It's basically like a bottle brush," he said.

Space heaters should be certified by Underwriters Laboratories (UL), should be plugged direct-

ly into an outlet rather than an extension cord, and have three feet of clear space around them on all sides, Beach said.

After being stored for the summer, space heaters may have gathered dust, so Beach said they should be dusted off before they are used.

"It's also best to have the ones that have a shut-off if they tip over," he said.

Finally, going in to the winter, Beach advises homeowners and renters to check the batteries on their smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors and replace them if needed. Most detectors will chirp if the batteries need to be replaced, Beach said.

Charles H. Featherstone can be reached at [cfeatherstone@colombiabasinherald.com](mailto:cfeatherstone@colombiabasinherald.com).

## How to winterize your home

By LISA GAUTHIER MITCHISON  
Angie's List/TNS

Winter weather can take a toll on your house. Here are a few ways you can take some of the pressure off it and keep energy bills from skyrocketing.

**Insulation.** Updating your house's insulation is one of the best investments. Not only will it keep you and your family comfortable during frigid weather, but also it means less energy expenditure, therefore, lower bills. Insulation can deteriorate over time, so if it's been a while since you inspected it, now is a good time to check it out. The best way to find out where you may be losing heat is to get an energy audit. They can pinpoint any heat loss, whether it's from the attic, windows, or walls.

A DIY project is installing weather stripping, which is inexpensive and can be found at any home improvement store. Weather stripping is self-adhesive, so it's easy to install around windows and doors. You can also caulk around windows and doors to lessen heat leakage.

**Outside the house.** Have your roof and siding inspected and make any necessary repairs. Prevention could save you a lot of money in the long run. Inspect gutters and downspouts to ensure proper fastening and re-secure sagging or loose gutters. Also, clean the gutters to avoid overflowing and icicles. Make sure downspouts reach at least 5 feet from the house to avoid flooding and water damage.

**Your lawn and garden.** Now is the time to

aerate and reseed the lawn. You can also use a winterizing fertilizer if you want to.

Cut back overgrown branches near the house and near any electrical wires. Ice and snow build-up can cause branches to break, potentially snapping a line (or damaging your home) on their way down.

**Turn off outside faucets.** Drain water from the pipes in order to avoid the pipes bursting. Remove any attached hoses and put them inside to avoid cracking. Cover exterior faucets to prevent water damage.

**Check outside lighting.** With long, dark days, proper lighting will help prevent accidents on iced-over walkways. Also, inspect handrails on outside stairs, making sure they are secure.

**Tools.** Prepare seasonal tools, such as snow blowers, with a tune-up, which includes a light coating of oil to prevent rust. Make these tools (including snow shovels and salt) easily accessible so you don't have to dig them out when you need them. Make sure everything is in proper working order.

Get your lawnmower ready for storage by cleaning away leaves, mud, grass and other debris.

**Inside the house.** Get your chimney inspected and cleaned to avoid unintentional and dangerous fires. It's also time for a furnace tune-up.

Remove window AC units or install specialized covers over them. This will help keep out drafts.

Ceiling fans should be switched to the reverse position, blowing warmer air down for better energy efficiency.



BANNER  
BANK

## We put you right at home.

When you're ready to build, buy or update your home, our experts can help you achieve your dreams. We're here to guide you, and offer the right financing for your situation.

Home loans | Construction loans | Lot loans

Let's create tomorrow, together.  
[bannerbank.com](http://bannerbank.com)

**Bonnie Thompson**  
NMLS# 507151  
Residential Loan Officer  
509-765-4713  
[blthompson@bannerbank.com](mailto:blthompson@bannerbank.com)

Member FDIC



## Need new cabinets?



Call Barbara for Kitchen Design that functions as great as it looks!

Medallion®

HUGE SAVINGS NOW THROUGH DEC 31ST



SKAUG BROS. CARPET ONE® FLOOR & HOME

SAVE 10% to 50% Every. Floor. Every. Day.

Call Us TODAY for a FREE Estimate! 509-765-0633 | 222 E. Third Ave, Moses Lake  
Open M-F 9am-5pm, Sat by appt. | [www.skaugbrotherscarpetmoseslake.com](http://www.skaugbrotherscarpetmoseslake.com)

Photos for illustrative purposes only. See store for details