

News from the City of Dearborn

Dearborn – Clean and Safe

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Dearborn Fire Chief urges use of surge protectors to prevent electrical fires ***Also advises about fire safety in the winter***

Dearborn, MI – Keeping fire safety in mind is important this time of year, especially when you or your family plug in any high-powered electronic devices – such as TVs or computers – you might get as a holiday gift.

Residents are reminded to use surge protectors – not just multiple plug power strips – for these types of devices, said Dearborn Fire Chief Nazih Hazime.

Electrical power surges can occur during the operation of high power electrical devices, during problems with the utility company's equipment, downed lines and lightning. Surges can also result from faulty wiring in the home.

A basic power strip that offers no protection, or a poorly made surge protector, can overheat during a surge, setting the device on fire. A quality surge protector will divert the extra electricity into the outlet's grounding wire.

"It's not a wise, or safe, strategy to protect expensive equipment like computers, TVs and stereos with a cheap power strip device," Hazime said. "We strongly recommend that people spend a little extra money and purchase a surge protector that will provide better safety for your valuables, and more importantly for your home and family."

When buying a surge protector, look for a certification label from an independent testing lab such as UL or ETL on the package and on the product.

Surge protectors range in quality and price. A power strip surge protector with quality ratings and extra features, such as a protection indicator light and individual switches for each outlet, can cost between \$15 and \$30.

Also available are surge stations, which fit under a computer or on the floor. They offer superior voltage protection and advanced line conditioning. Most models also have an input for a phone line, to protect the computer modem from power surges, and may feature built-in circuit breakers. The price for these ranges from \$30 to \$100.

In general, residents should avoid the use of “cube taps” and other devices that allow the connection of multiple devices into a single receptacle.

Hazime also urges residents to use extra caution in the home during the winter months when people increase their lighting, heating and appliance use.

Another important safety issue is the use of space heaters. When using a space heater, choose one that has been tested to the latest safety standards. An automatic shut-off device is now required to turn off electric or kerosene heaters if they tip over. Extra guarding around the heating coils is also required.

Heaters should be kept on a level, hard, non-flammable surface, and they should be at least three feet from bedding, drapes and furniture.

For a liquid fueled space heater, use only the fuel recommended by the manufacturer. Never use gasoline or any other substitute fuel, because the wrong fuel could burn hotter than the equipment’s design limits and cause a fire.

Never leave a space heater on when sleeping, or close to any sleeping person. And always turn the heater off when leaving the room.

Remember these other important fire safety tips:

- Have a smoke alarm with fresh batteries on each level of the house and inside every bedroom. In addition, have a carbon monoxide alarm outside the bedroom in each separate sleeping area.
- Have the furnace checked by a qualified technician to determine that it is in good working order and is safe for extended use.
- Avoid overloading outlets and running extension cords across doorways and under carpets.
- Candles in the home should only be used by adults and should not be left in high-traffic areas. Do not leave candles unattended.
- Be extremely careful when using an electric blanket. Worn-out wires can become warm without the user knowing.
- Have your chimney inspected by a professional prior to the start of every heating season and cleaned if necessary. Creosote, a chemical substance that forms when wood burns, builds up in chimneys and can cause a chimney fire if not properly cleaned.
- Use a sturdy screen when burning fires. Do not burn paper or pine boughs, which can float out the chimney and ignite your roof or a neighboring home. Never use flammable liquids in a fireplace.

- Be sure your wood or coal stove bears the label of a recognized testing laboratory and meets local fire codes. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for proper installation, use and maintenance.
- Never leave home with the clothes dryer running. Dryers must be vented to the outside and the lint screen should be cleaned frequently.

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