



Michael A. Maresco
Town Administrator

Town of Marshfield

870 Moraine Street

Marshfield, Massachusetts 02050

Tel: 781-834-5563

Fax: 781-834-5527

PRESS RELEASE

MARSHFIELD SENIOR CENTER TO OPEN AS A WARMING SHELTER

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On Saturday, February 4, 2023 the Marshfield Senior Center will be open as a Warming Center for residents that do not have heat during this severe cold weather from 8:00AM until 5:00PM. If you are in your home and you have no heat and want to get to the warming center, please call the Marshfield Police Department at 781-834-6655. If you have an emergency, please call 911.

Below you will find information from the State Fire Marshall's Office regarding staying warm safely;

With bitter cold temperatures heading our way this weekend, State Fire Marshal Peter J. Ostroskey is reminding residents to "Keep Warm, Keep Safe" and avoid fire and carbon monoxide (CO) hazards while heating their homes.

"Home heating equipment is the second-leading cause of residential fires and the main source of carbon monoxide at home," State Fire Marshal Ostroskey said. "Working smoke and CO alarms are your first line of defense against these hazards. With furnaces, fireplaces, and space heaters working overtime this weekend, be sure they're installed on every floor of your home and test them to be sure you and your family are protected.

Space Heaters - "It's important to keep space heaters at least three feet from curtains, bedding, and anything else that can burn," State Fire Marshal Ostroskey said. "Plug them directly into a wall socket, not an extension cord or a power strip, and remember that they're intended for temporary use. Always turn a space heater off when you leave the room or go to sleep."

When purchasing a space heater, select one that's been tested and labeled by a nationally recognized testing laboratory such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL) or Intertek (ETL). Newer space heaters should have an automatic shut-off switch that turns the device off if it tips over. Portable propane and kerosene space heaters are illegal for sale and use in Massachusetts: the risk of fire and carbon monoxide poisoning that they pose is too great.

Fireplaces, Wood Stoves, and Pellet Stoves - Solid fuel heating appliances such as fireplaces and wood stoves have accounted for a rising share of home heating fires in recent years. Open the dampener before lighting a fire; use only dry, seasoned wood; don't use flammable liquids to start the fire; and keep a three-foot "circle of safety" around the fireplace or stove free of anything that can burn. Shovel ashes from the stove or fireplace into a metal bucket with a metal lid and place it outside on the ground away from the building – not in the trash. Most chimney fires occur because of a build-up of creosote, a tarry byproduct of burning wood: fire officials recommend having your chimney and flue professionally inspected and cleaned each year.

Natural Gas and Oil Heat - If you have a furnace, water heater, or oil burner with a pilot light, keep the three-foot "circle of safety" clear of anything that could catch fire, and don't store gasoline, painting supplies, or other flammable solvents in the home: their vapors can be ignited by a pilot light. These heating systems should be checked annually by a professional, as well. If you smell gas, don't use any electrical switches or devices: get out, stay out, and call 9-1-1 right away.

Create and Practice a Home Escape Plan - Everyone should have a home escape plan that includes two ways out of every room, and everyone should be able to open the doors and windows along the way. Remember that children, older adults, and people with disabilities may need extra assistance.

Heating Assistance - Residents struggling to pay for heating bills or maintenance may be eligible for assistance through the [Massachusetts home energy assistance program \(LIHEAP\)](#). No matter what type of heating equipment you use, LIHEAP may be able to help you pay your winter heating bills or maintain your heating system so it runs more safely and efficiently. All Massachusetts residents are encouraged to explore eligibility for this free program and apply for assistance.

More Home Heating Safety Tips - The Department of Fire Services offers a wealth of home heating safety information, including the "Keep Warm, Keep Safe" tool kit for local fire departments, caregivers, and service providers, at www.mass.gov/keepwarmkeepsafe.

Essential Fire Safety Tips

- Make sure there are working smoke and carbon monoxide alarms on every level of your home and outside each bedroom.
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms monthly and change batteries twice a year, when you change the clocks.
- Create a home escape plan and hold home fire drills to practice the plan.
- Practice home fire safety and set a good example for the children

The [Keep Warm Keep Safe English/Spanish Brochure](#) is a color pamphlet on winter home heating safety in both English and Spanish.

Safe Use of Fireplaces and Solid Fuel Stoves - If you [heat your home with solid fuels](#) (coal, firewood, pellets), follow these safe practices:

- Have your chimney professionally cleaned every year.
- Make sure the stove is approved by a national testing agency such as Underwriter's Laboratory (UL).
- Get a building permit before installing a stove.
- Keep anything that can burn three feet away.
- Dispose of ashes in a metal container, with a lid, away from the house, garage and porch.

Safe Use of Space Heaters - [Space heater](#) fires are rare but often deadly. If you must use a space heater, follow these safe practices:

- Do not use space heaters as your #1 heating source.
- Keep anything that can burn three feet away.
- Use only heavy-duty extension cords.
- Always turn off space heaters when going to bed or leaving home.
- It is illegal to use portable kerosene heaters in Massachusetts homes.
- Read or print the brochure [Space Heater Safety in English](#) or [Space Heater Safety in Spanish](#) for additional tips.

Maintain Natural Gas Equipment - Natural gas is a safe and efficient way to cook and to heat homes and hot water. Follow these safe practices if you use natural gas:

- Have your furnace and hot water heater professionally checked every year.
- Do not use or store gasoline or painting supplies indoors where the furnace pilot light can ignite them.

Gas leaks can be dangerous – if you smell something like rotten eggs or you think there might be a leak,

- Go outdoors.
- Do not smoke or turn electrical switches on or off - sparks can cause an explosion.
- Dial 911 immediately.

Maintain Oil Heating Equipment - Home heating with fuel oil is safe and efficient. Follow these safe practices if you use oil:

- Have your furnace professionally cleaned and checked every year.
- Don't let the tank get completely empty.
- Call for service if the oil burner releases smoke or soot in the house

Practice Carbon Monoxide Safety - Heating equipment is the leading source of carbon monoxide (CO) in the home and CO is deadly. To protect your home and family from CO poisoning, follow these safety practices:

- Install carbon monoxide alarms on every level of your home.
- Don't use a gas stove or oven for heat.
- Have furnaces and chimneys checked annually by a professional.
- Keep appliance vents and exhaust pipes clear of drifting snow and bushes.

MEMA OFFERS PRECAUTIONS FOR EXTREME COLD WEATHER - "With the forecast of extremely cold temperatures and severe wind chill over the next few days, the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) is presenting these cold weather safety tips," stated MEMA Director Kurt Schwartz. Continue to be aware of the timing of extreme weather conditions by monitoring Media reports. Make sure you always have a well-stocked Winter Home Emergency Supply Kit that includes flashlights, portable radio, extra batteries, a first aid kit, bottled water, non-perishable food, a manual can opener extra heavy blankets. Minimize outside activities, particularly the elderly and very young. Also, consider your pets. Dress in several layers of loose-fitting, lightweight clothing, rather than a single layer of heavy clothing. Outer garments should be tightly woven and water repellent. Wear a hat, mittens and sturdy waterproof boots, protecting your extremities. Cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs. Excessive exposure can lead to frostbite, which is damaging to body tissue that is frozen. Frostbite causes a loss of feeling and a pale appearance in extremities, such as fingers, toes, ear lobes or the tip of the nose. If symptoms are detected, seek medical help immediately. Hypothermia can occur in extreme cases. The warning signs are uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, incoherence, slurred speech, drowsiness and apparent exhaustion. If the person's temperature drops below 95 degrees, seek immediate medical care. Ensure you have sufficient heating fuel, as well as emergency heating equipment in case you lose electricity. Remember that unvented kerosene heaters are illegal in Massachusetts. Call Mass211 or check with your local Emergency Management Office to find the locations of any Warming Centers that may be open in your community. -more- When utilizing alternate heating sources, such as your fireplace, wood stove, space heater or a generator, take the necessary safety precautions. Keep the heat sources 3-feet away from anything that can catch fire. Turn off space heaters when going to bed or leaving the house. Keep a fire extinguisher handy; ensuring everyone knows how to use it properly. Test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors. If you lose your heat, seal off unused rooms by stuffing towels in the cracks under the doors. At night, cover windows with extra blankets or sheets. Food provides the body with energy for producing its own heat. Be a good neighbor. Check with elderly or relatives and friends who may need additional

assistance to ensure their safety. To keep pipes from freezing, wrap them in insulation or layers of newspapers, covering the newspapers with plastic to keep out moisture. Allow a trickle of warm water to run from a faucet that is farthest from your water meter or one that has frozen in the past. This will keep the water moving so that it cannot freeze. Learn how to shut off your water if a pipe bursts. If pipes freeze, remove insulation, completely open all faucets and pour hot water over the pipes or wrap them with towels soaked in hot water, starting where they are most exposed to the cold. A hand-held hair dryer, used with caution, also works well. Open kitchen and bathroom cabinet doors to allow warmer air to circulate around the plumbing. Be sure to move any harmful cleaners and household chemicals up out of the reach of children. Keep the thermostat set to the same temperature both during the day and at night. By temporarily suspending the use of lower nighttime temperatures, you may incur a higher heating bill, but you can prevent a much more costly repair job if pipes freeze and burst. Make sure your car is properly winterized. Keep the gas tank at least half-full. Carry a Winter Emergency Car Kit in the trunk including blankets, extra clothing, flashlight with spare batteries, a can and waterproof matches (to melt snow for drinking water), non-perishable foods, windshields scraper, shovel, sand, towrope and jumper cables. The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) is the state agency responsible for coordinating federal, state, local, voluntary and private resources during emergencies and disasters in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. MEMA provides leadership to: develop plans for effective response to all hazards, disasters or threats; train emergency personnel to protect the public; provide information to the citizenry; and assist individuals, families, businesses and communities to mitigate against, prepare for, and respond to and recover from emergencies, both natural and man-made. For additional information about MEMA and Winter Preparedness, go to www.mass.gov/mema.