

Red Cross Offers Safety Tips in Wake of Weekend Fires

(KTNC) - The Red Cross is encouraging people to think safety when heating their homes during the cold weather.

The advice comes after Red Cross volunteers provided assistance to 48 people affected by a dozen fires across Nebraska and southwest Iowa over the weekend. The agency answered calls for help in Omaha, Lincoln, Kearney, Lexington, Grand Island, Hickman, and Talmage in Nebraska and responded to fires in Pisgah and Council Bluffs in Iowa.

The Red Cross says to be cautious when using space heaters and other heating sources, and to make a plan in case of a home fire.

To reduce the risk of fires, they recommend keeping anything that can burn – including paper, bedding or furniture – at least three feet away from heating equipment and fireplaces.

Other tips include:

- Never leave a fire in the fireplace unattended and use a glass or metal fire screen to keep fire and embers in the fireplace,
- Never use a cooking range to heat your home,
- Turn off portable space heaters when you leave a room or go to sleep,
- Have wood and coal stoves, fireplaces, and chimneys inspected annually by a professional.
- If you must use a space heater, place it on a level, hard and non-flammable surface, not on rugs or carpets or near bedding or drapes. Plug power cords directly into outlets and never into an extension cord.

Heating sources are the leading cause of winter fires and increase during the months of December, January, and February.