



Excelsior Fire District

Fire & Life Safety

Winter Hazards

Hydrants, Icicles, and Space Heaters

Hydrants

Adopt your neighborhood hydrant. - Adopt the hydrant in your business district.

March is the snowiest month of the year and it is important that you, your neighbors, and your business community take care of your fire hydrant. Fire hydrants are an important tool for the firefighter to use to fight a structure fire. Searching and digging out a hydrant wasting valuable time that could be used to rescue victims and out a fire. It's not only the responsibility of people who have a hydrant in their yard or in front of their business, it takes everyone's efforts to keep the firefighter's water source for their area accessible.

Take responsibility for your hydrant. During the winter months the falling snow and the snowplows can bury fire hydrants. When you shovel out your driveway, sidewalk, or mailbox take an extra minute to shovel out your fire hydrant. A 3-foot clear space should be maintained around the circumference of a fire hydrant. This is the amount of space the firefighters need to operate a fire hydrant while fighting a structure fire

All year round fire hydrants must be free of obstructions. This includes shrubs, plants, garbage cans, debris, birdbaths, and any decorative yard ornaments.

It is important to know that if your neighbor's house is on fire, the firefighters need time and water to protect your home. If you share a wall, space, building or are in close proximity to another business that has a fire, the firefighters will need all the water and time they can get to protect your businesses from heat, flames, smoke damage, and toxic gases.

Minnesota State Fire Code - Section 508

Statute 508.5.4 Obstruction. Post, fences, vehicles, growth, trash, storage and other materials or objects shall not be placed or objects shall not be placed or kept near fire hydrants, fire departments inlet connections or fire protection system control valves in a manner that would prevent such equipment or fire hydrants from being immediately discernible. The fire department shall not be deterred or hindered from gaining immediate access to fire protection equipment or fire hydrants.

Statute 508.5.5 Clear space around hydrants. A 3-foot (914mm) clear space shall be maintained around the circumference of a fire hydrant except as otherwise required or approved.

Icicles and Ice

Be aware of the dangers associated with icicles. Icicles are heavy and sharp and can cause minor or fatal injuries, building damage, and fires. Icicles should be removed from areas around your home or business if they are hanging over entrances and exits, gas meters, utility boxes, areas where people gather, over sidewalks or anywhere they can cause damage or harm.

Ice build up can be particularly dangerous on gas meters, the vents should be kept dry and clear of snow and ice at all times to avoid potential dangerous indoor natural gas buildup. When ice and snow melt during the day and refreeze at night the vent can be blocked. Like hydrants it is very important to keep your gas meter assembly clear of snow. Accumulated snow can prevent the meter from operating properly by stopping the flow of natural gas. It is also important to protect your gas meter from melting snow dripping from above or causing water to pool around the meter. When the water turns into ice it can cause many problems, some are very dangerous. If you notice ice on your meter or are concerned that the meter's regulator vent may be blocked, please call Xcel Energy at 1-800-895-2999 or Centerpoint Energy at 612-342-5123.

If you live in Hennepin County, Centerpoint Energy may be able to provide your home or commercial property with a free Ice Shield and installation for your gas meter. Call 612-342-5123 and follow the options for more information.

When removing icicles, be careful, use a long pole and do not stand directly under them as you break them off. Push the icicles away from you and use eye protection. Use caution when you break them off to make sure you do not damage your roof, gutters, or eaves. Make sure children and pets are not near when you are removing icicles. Icicles can shatter like glass on impact and flying ice can cause eye injuries, cuts, dent to vehicles, and break windows.

Space Heaters

The Slogan For Space Heaters Is “Give Space Heaters Space”

Each year space heaters cause hundreds of home and business fires resulting in fire deaths, injuries, and millions of dollars in damage. As with all heating equipment it is important to know how to use a space heater safely and to prevent a space heater from causing a fire in your home or business. Home heating is the second leading cause of house fires behind cooking.

It is extremely important that the manufacturer's instructions for each space heater are followed. The manufacturer's instructions should never be removed from a space heater and can usually be found on the cord or the back of the space heater.

Each space heater model has variation of manufacturer's instructions.

Space heaters must be stamped or have an Underwriters Laboratories (UL) or independent testing laboratories mark. Any heater too old to have an independent testing laboratories mark is too old to operate safely.

Space heaters should be plugged directly to an outlet and not an extension cord, surge protector, or multi-plug. Most of the manufacturer's instructions will give this direction or at least advise against it. Business owners should consider making an office policy that space heaters must be plugged in directly to an outlet and unplugged when not in use.

Keep space heaters away from combustibles, papers, briefcases, shoes, boots, coats, lunch boxes, shopping bags. Basically anything on or under a desk or around the space heater that might catch on fire. Never operate a space heater next to a bed or under curtains.

In business space heaters should be unplugged every night before the staff leaves. In homes space heaters should only be plugged in when a room is occupied by a person who is awake. Most manufacturers' instructions say to shut off and unplug the heaters when not in use. Even the little red or green indicator on the space heater draws electricity when the unit is shut off.

Space heaters should not have frayed, pinched, or damaged cords. Space heater cords should not be run under rugs or any other materials.

A space heater should be in good condition. All the knobs should be in place and secure, the front grate/cage should be secure and there should be no major damage to the unit.

No tape, wire, or rope should be used to repair the heater, hang it, prop it, or keep it in place.

Allow the heater venting space so it does not over heat or ignite items around it on fire. Venting or distance information should be in the manufacturer's instructions.

Minnesota State Fire Codes For Space Heaters

Business owners should be aware that there are fire codes in the Minnesota State Fire Code (MSFC) that apply to the use of space heaters in commercial buildings. This includes office spaces, retail stores, restaurants, general business, and any building listed in the MSFC. The codes are listed below.

Minnesota State Fire Code - Section 605

605.10 Portable, electric space heaters. Portable, electric space heaters shall comply with Sections 605.10.1 through 605.10.4.

605.10.1 Listed and labeled. Only listed and labeled portable, electric space heaters shall be used.

605.10.2 Power supply. Portable, electric space heaters shall be plugged directly into an approved receptacle.

605.10.3 Extension cords. Portable, electric space heaters shall not be plugged into extension cords.

605.10.4 Prohibited areas. Portable, electric space heaters shall not be operated within 3 feet (914 mm) of any combustible materials. Portable, electric space heaters shall be operated only in locations for which they are listed.

For more information contact the Excelsior Fire District at 952-960-1692 or kmurphyringate@excelsiorfire.org