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State Fire Commissioner Offers Tips to Stay Warm and ‘Be Fire-Safe’ During Deep Freeze

Harrisburg, PA – During the current stretch of extreme cold weather, Pennsylvania State Fire Commissioner Bruce Trego is offering tips for Pennsylvanians to stay warm while being “fire-safe,” and reminding Pennsylvanians of available help for home heating bills via the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

Heating equipment is a leading cause of fires in U.S. homes. According to nationwide numbers from the National Fire Protection Association, local fire departments responded to an estimated average of 52,050 fires involving heating equipment each year from 2012 through 2016, accounting for 15 percent of all reported home fires. These fires resulted in 490 civilian deaths, 1,400 civilian injuries, and \$1 billion in direct property damage each year.

“A few simple safety tips and precautions can prevent most heating fires from happening,” Fire Commissioner Trego said.

Those tips include:

- Keep anything that can burn at least three feet from heating equipment, such as the furnace, fireplace, wood stove, or portable space heater.
- NEVER use an oven to heat your home.
- Have heating equipment and chimneys cleaned and inspected every year by a qualified professional.
- Remember to turn portable heaters off when leaving the room or going to bed.
- Always use the right kind of fuel, specified by the manufacturer, for fuel burning space heaters.
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors at least once a month.

“Monthly home heating bills are difficult burdens for thousands of our commonwealth’s most vulnerable households,” Trego added. “We do not want to see people developing unsafe habits with heating equipment and putting their families at risk. If you’re worried about the affordability of heat this winter, there is help available.”

Individuals struggling with the costs associated with heating their homes can seek help from the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Financial assistance is available for both renters and homeowners. Crisis and regular LIHEAP

applications end April 12, 2019. Eligibility for the 2018-19 LIHEAP season is set at 150 percent of the federal poverty income guidelines.

“Everyone deserves a safe, warm home that helps them stay healthy and comfortable throughout the winter,” said Department of Human Services Secretary Teresa Miller. “LIHEAP helped make this possible for more than 340,000 Pennsylvania households last year. That number includes thousands of the commonwealth’s most vulnerable citizens - children, older Pennsylvanians, and individuals with a disability – helping them make ends meet as heating costs increase.”

If any Pennsylvanians experience a heating emergency such as running out of fuel or your heat source breaking, LIHEAP Crisis is available to get your heat restored quickly. For information, individuals should contact their local County Assistance Office or crisis contractor in their area. For a list of phone numbers, visit [here](#).

Online applications for LIHEAP can be completed at www.compass.state.pa.us. Paper applications are available through local county assistance offices or interested applicants can download and print an application.

For other helpful tips on keeping warm throughout the winter while saving money on utility costs, visit www.energysavers.gov.

For more information on LIHEAP, visit www.dhs.pa.gov.

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