



MONROE FIRE DISTRICT #3

163 Village Court • Monroe, WA 98272

NEWS RELEASE **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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CONTACT: Richelle Risdon, Public Education & Information Officer
PHONE: (360) 805-0338
EMAIL: risdon@monroefire.org

Home Heating Incident Turns Tragic

Monroe, WA—On December 11, 2009, Monroe firefighters responded to the 19000 block of 144th Pl. SE. to an incident where a gentleman's clothes had caught fire. Firefighters arrived on scene within five minutes to find that the flames had been extinguished by family members. According to reports, the gentleman had backed into an open flame propane heater in his wheelchair when his clothes caught fire, causing subsequent burns. Monroe Fire District #3 treated and transported the injured man to Harborview Medical Center where he later died. Yesterday, the King County Medical Examiner's Office stated that the man, 76, had died from 40% thermal burns over his body. Monroe Fire District #3 expresses our heartfelt sympathy to the family and friends of this gentleman.

During these cold winter months, it is not uncommon to use alternative sources of heat when trying to stay warm, but it is imperative that we do what we can to prevent tragedies such as this. Monroe Fire District #3 and the National Fire Protection Association offer these tips:

Heating Safety Tips (NFPA.org): *Heating equipment is a leading cause of home fire deaths. Almost half of home heating equipment fires are reported during the months of December, January, and February. Some simple steps can prevent most heating-related fires from happening.*

- Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from heating equipment, such as the furnace, fireplace, wood stove, or portable heater. (If your clothes catch fire: stop, drop, and roll or smother the flames with a towel, blanket, or other heavy material).
- Only use heating equipment that has the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- Never use your oven for heating.
- Have a qualified professional install stationary space heating equipment, water heaters or central heating equipment according to the local codes and manufacturer's instructions.
- Maintain heating equipment and chimneys by having them cleaned and inspected annually by a qualified professional.
- Turn portable heaters off when leaving the room or going to bed.
- For fuel burning space heaters, always use the proper fuel as specified by the manufacturer.
- Make sure the fireplace has a sturdy screen to prevent sparks from flying into the room and burn only dry, seasoned wood. Allow ashes to cool before disposing in a metal container, which is kept a safe distance from the home.
- For wood burning stoves, install chimney connectors and chimneys following manufacturer's instructions or have a professional do the installation.
- Make sure all fuel-burning equipment is vented to the outside to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Install and maintain carbon monoxide (CO) alarms to avoid the risk of CO poisoning.
- If you smell gas in your gas heater, do not attempt to light the appliance. Turn off all the controls and open doors and windows. Call a gas service person.
- Test smoke alarms at least monthly. # # #