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Experts at Pilgrim Home & Hearth Offer Fireplace Safety Tips This Winter

Concord, CA: As nights become cooler across the country, millions of homeowners turn to using their wood stoves and fireplaces to take up cozy comfort by the hearth. Each year at this time experts urge families to take some simple fireplace safety precautions.

More than 6,000 people annually end up in emergency rooms for injuries associated with fireplaces and fireplace equipment... and most of the injuries occurred with children under five years old.

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, (CPSC) there are over 22 million fireplaces in use and one third of American families use fireplaces and solid fuel burning stoves as a primary source of heating. An estimated 14,000 house fires each year are started by fires that escalate beyond the fireplace because of an overloading the fireplace, damage to the fireplace such as missing bricks, obstructed flues, ignition of nearby combustibles, and flying sparks. Most all of these fires could have been avoided if proper safety precautions and annual inspections took place.

The fireplace experts at Pilgrim Home & Hearth advise getting your chimney swept and inspected at least once a year. If you go through more than a cord in a season, consider maintenance more often, say, after you burn a cord of wood. Even if you don't always burn wood, but the chimney is part of the central heating system's ventilation system, periodic inspections and cleanings are warranted, Pilgrim says.

Pilgrim Home and Hearth wants to help keep your family safe and warm by offering these fireplace safety tips:

- Have chimneys inspected annually, and cleaned as necessary, by a CSIA (Chimney Safety Institute of America) Certified Chimney Sweep. This reduces the risk of fires and carbon monoxide poisonings due to creosote buildup or obstructions in the chimneys. To locate a certified sweep, visit the CSIA Web site at www.csia.org or visit www.hpba.org for more fireplace safety information.
- Ensure that a sturdy fireplace screen is used on the hearth and spark guard is installed on the top of the chimney. Remove branches hanging above the chimney, flues or vents.
- Equip the house with fire-warning devices. Install a type ABC fire extinguisher near the fireplace. Keep combustible materials such as carpets, furniture, paper, logs and kindling at least 3 feet away from the fireplace. Arrange andirons so logs can't roll out.
- Fuel the fire safely. For burning firewood in wood stoves or fireplaces, choose well-seasoned wood that has been dried for a minimum of six months to a year and stored properly.

- Build it right. Place firewood or fire logs at the rear of the fireplace on a supporting grate. To start the fire, use a firelighter. Never use gasoline, charcoal lighter or other fuel to light or relight a fire because the vapors can explode. Never keep flammable fuels near a fire. Vapors can travel the length of a room and explode.
- Do not use coal or charcoal in a fireplace because of the danger of carbon monoxide build-up. Do not burn trash or gift wrap in the fireplace because polystyrene foam and other coated materials can generate deadly fumes. Flying paper embers could also ignite the roof.
- Do not treat artificial logs like real logs. Artificial logs are usually made of sawdust and wax and have special burning properties. Be sure to read the instructions on the logs and follow them carefully.
- At holiday time, make sure the Christmas tree and gift wrapping is not close enough to be ignited by a spark. Be especially careful of letting trees dry out by keeping them watered daily.
- Always make sure that the fire is completely extinguished before going to bed for the night or when leaving the house.
- Be sure that all ashes have thoroughly cooled before you dispose of them. Put ashes in a lidded metal container to prevent a possible fire and provide a sturdy place to store them. Ashes make good fertilizer in gardens, flowerbeds, etc.

These are general guidelines which are very important in fireplace safety! The most important tip we can offer is to keep a fire extinguisher on hand and place smoke detectors throughout the house. Test the smoke detectors and batteries regularly. See that the extinguisher is in good working order and that all family members know how to operate it.

About Pilgrim Home & Hearth Alliance, LLC

Pilgrim Home & Hearth is a global supplier of fireplace accessories and has been at the center of the hearth for over 65 years. Pilgrim markets its products under the brand names of Pilgrim®, Smithsonian Collection®, Old World®, and Napa Forge®. Our broad selection of robust, hand-forged steel products is appreciated by those who yearn for the virtues of quality craftsmanship and lasting materials. Pilgrim's best-selling fireplace products can be purchased through regional distributors and over 750 specialty retailers across North America. For more information please visit www.PilgrimHearth.com

Request for product images and or personal interviews are invited and welcomed.