

What's the Fire Risk in January?

Fire Data Based on MFIRS Reporting, January 2009 – 2018

- 8% of all fires throughout the year
- Average of 30 civilian injuries
- Average of 49 fire service injuries
- Average of 5 civilian deaths
- Average of \$22.3 million in property loss

The leading cause of fires in January, and in fact in every month is cooking, but in January, the number of heating fires increase. This is the time to focus educational attention to heating issues. January, the coldest month, may also be the month that people run out of fuel and begin using unsafe alternatives like stoves and space heaters as their primary source of heat.

Educational Opportunities

Heating is the second leading cause of fire deaths in January. Home fires peak from December through February when the cold weather drives people indoors, heating systems are in regular use, and people turn to alternatives such as space heaters and wood or pellet stoves. The [Keep Warm, Keep](#)

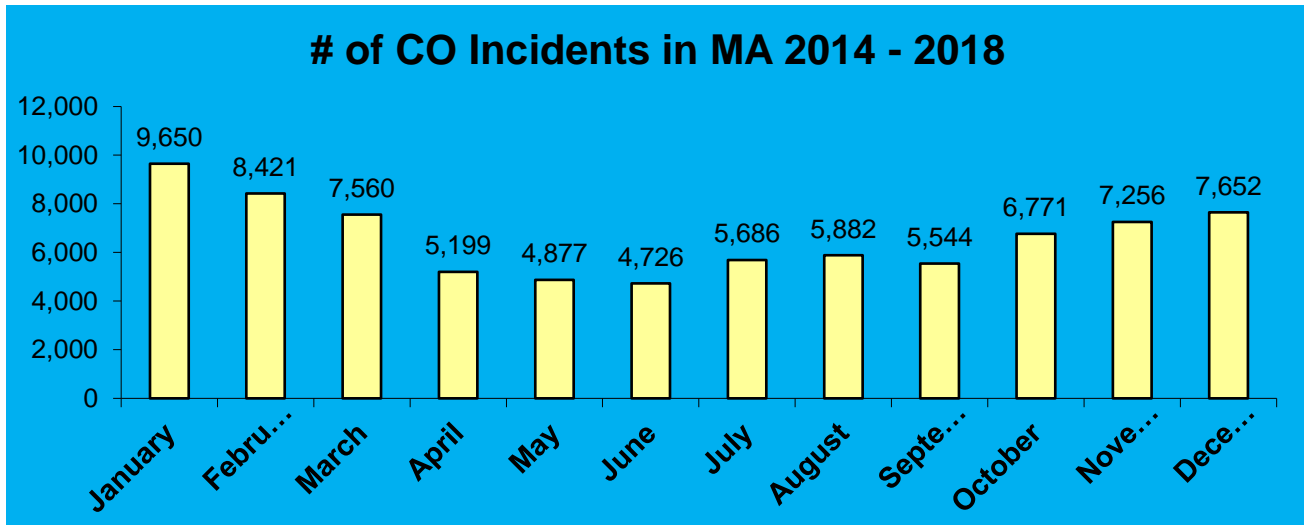


[Safe](#) campaign has information and a toolkit for fire educators to help prevent winter home heating fires. It includes a logo for local use, TV and radio public service announcements that can be aired locally, educational handouts that can be downloaded and a full color English/Spanish pamphlet that can be ordered in quantity from the [Massachusetts Health Promotion Clearinghouse](#).

Carbon Monoxide Safety

Another concern during the heating season is a greater chance for exposure to [Carbon Monoxide Safety](#). January has the most CO incidents of any month during the year. Hundreds of people die accidentally each year from CO poisoning caused by malfunctioning or improperly used fuel-burning appliances (EPA data). According to the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), CO is the number one cause of poisoning deaths in the U.S. Warning signs of CO poisoning include headaches, nausea, dizziness, confusion, fainting, unconsciousness and death. CO poisoning can also mimic flu symptoms.





[Working smoke and CO alarms](#) are essential fire safety tools. Resources are available from DFS that will help prevent CO or heating fatalities.

Winter Storm Warnings

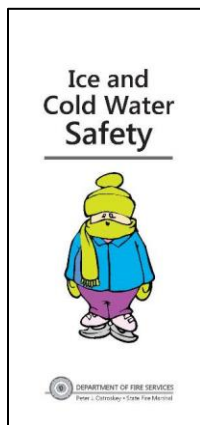
Winter snows can create drifts that block furnace and dryer exhaust vents, forcing carbon monoxide (CO) gas to back-up into homes. The heat from the exhaust may not melt the snow, especially after a power outage. [Winter Storm Safety](#) flyers in English and Spanish are available on the DFS website.

Generator Safety

During winter storms, prolonged power outages result in an increase of generator use. Keep generators outside, facing away from doors, windows and vents. Never use a generator inside a house, basement or crawl space – not even a garage with the door open. DFS has a page dedicated to [generator safety](#).



USFA Low Literacy Pictograph



Ice Safety

Each year, many Massachusetts residents are injured in cold water. Skaters and ice fishermen fall through the ice. Unleashed pets run onto the ice and people chase them. The [Ice and cold water safety page](#) has information about hypothermia, and what to do if someone falls through the water. This page will provide departments with tools to promote these safety messages. Remember, the only safe ice is on a rink.



Department of Fire Services

Office of the State Fire Marshal • www.mass.gov/dfs