



**American  
Red Cross**

of Greater Columbus

# NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Survey Finds Concerns About Economy May Increase Incidence of Home Fires

## ***Fire Prevention Week Survey Shows Nearly Half of Americans Planning to Use Alternative Heating Sources this Winter***

**October 9, 2008** - The American Red Cross and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) released results of a survey showing the majority (79%) of Americans are concerned about the rising cost of heating their homes, and many will use an alternative heating source to reduce their bills this winter. The survey identified additional behaviors related to appliance maintenance and cooking that could also present home fire hazards this winter.

“As we head into, what by all accounts is likely to be a very costly heating season, these survey results and Fire Prevention Week (Oct. 5-11) provide a critical opportunity for us to remind people about the things they can do to prevent home fires and keep their families safe and warm this winter,” said NFPA President James. M. Shannon. “If people use alternative heat sources to reduce energy costs, it is critical they use devices that are new or in good working order, and they turn off units when they go to bed or leave the room.”

“We hope this survey will encourage more people to take the simple steps necessary to protect their families and homes from fire,” said Michael Carroll, CEO of the American Red Cross of Greater Columbus. “Of the more than 74,000 disasters the American Red Cross responds to each year, approximately 93% are fire related, but unlike natural disasters, most home fires can be prevented.” The American Red Cross of Greater Columbus helps more than 500 families every year after disasters strike, most of which are home fires.

### Heating and Cooking Fires:

According to NFPA reports, cooking and heating are the leading causes of home fires. The survey revealed the majority of Americans are concerned about the rising cost of heating their homes (79%), and that 48% of households will use an alternative heating source to reduce their bills this winter. Alternative heating sources include portable space heaters, stoves, ovens and fireplaces. A third (36%) of people with fireplaces reported they never cleaned or inspected their chimneys. The survey also found 23% of respondents did not consider it essential to make sure someone is home when food is cooking on the stove.

### Young Adults at Risk:

Young adults, ages 18-24, were more likely than other respondents to state they will use the oven to keep the kitchen warm this winter (17% versus 7% for all households). Young adults were also less likely to take precautionary steps such as removing the lint from the dryer filter after every load (one in three do not remove the lint after every load).

### Smoke Alarms and Fire Escape Plans:

Respondents also revealed another unsafe behavior, which is disabling (37%) smoke alarms when they go off in a non-testing situation. More than half (53%) of the households surveyed have not taken any of three common actions in most home fire escape plans, which includes discussing with family members how to get out of the home, deciding on an outdoor meeting place and practicing the plan.

“Red Cross volunteers respond to an average of one home fire every night in greater Columbus, providing comfort, shelter and aid to help families pick up the pieces,” said Carroll. “That’s why the Red Cross is working during Fire Prevention Week, and each and every day, to help people prevent and stay safe in the event of a home fire.”

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NFPA has been the official sponsor of Fire Prevention Week for more than 85 years. Each year, NFPA selects an official theme to support the week which is celebrated each October. This year, Fire Prevention Week is October 5 – 11 and the theme is It's Fire Prevention Week: Prevent Home Fires. NFPA creates official campaign materials as well as a web site providing fire departments, families, kids and educators with information to implement a successful community-wide campaign. For more information visit [www.firepreventionweek.org](http://www.firepreventionweek.org).

NFPA and the American Red Cross offer these and other safety tips:

- Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling or broiling food. If you must leave, even for a short time, turn off the stove.
- Give space heaters space by keeping them at least 3 feet from anything that can burn. Turn off heaters when you leave the room or go to sleep.
- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, inside bedrooms and outside sleeping areas.

For additional fire safety tips visit [www.firepreventionweek.org](http://www.firepreventionweek.org) or [www.redcross.org/homefires](http://www.redcross.org/homefires).

NOTE TO EDITORS: Research findings from a telephone survey of 1,003 U.S. Adults 18 years and older on September 25-28, 2008 conducted by CARAVAN®. Margin of error is +/- 3.1%t at the 95% confidence level. If you report data from the survey, source it as originating from American Red Cross/National Fire Protection Association 2008. A full data set can be accessed [here](#).

#### About Fire Prevention Week

For more than 85 years Fire Prevention Week has been observed by fire departments in the U.S. and Canada to mark the anniversary of the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. The President of the United States has issued a proclamation designating a national observance during Fire Prevention Week every year since 1925. It is the longest running health and safety observance on record, according to the National Archives and Records Administration Library Center.

#### About the National Fire Protection Association

NFPA has been a worldwide leader in providing fire, electrical, building, and life safety to the public since 1896. The mission of the international nonprofit organization is to reduce the worldwide burden of fire and other hazards on the quality of life by providing and advocating consensus codes and standards, research, training, and education.

#### About the American Red Cross of Greater Columbus

The American Red Cross of Greater Columbus is dedicated to helping make families and communities safer at home and around the world. Sustained by over 600 volunteers, the Red Cross provides assistance to more than 500 families each year after home fires and other disasters strike. Last year the organization trained and educated more than 97,000 area residents in vital lifesaving skills like first aid, CPR and how to prepare for emergencies. The Red Cross also sent more than 800 emergency messages between members of the military and their families. The Community Transportation Program provides rides to medical appointments for seniors and individuals with disabilities, logging more than 19,600 trips last year. The Red Cross is a charitable organization – not a government agency – and depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to perform its humanitarian mission. Michael Carroll is the CEO and Mary Navarro serves as the board chair.

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