

# COLUMBUS<sup>®</sup> CURRENTS

## Five Ways to Safeguard Your Home This Winter

By Abby Berry

As the temperatures drop and the days grow shorter, there's a natural inclination to create a warm and cozy haven at home. Unfortunately, as we see increased use of heating equipment, candles and electrical items, the number of home fires tends to increase during winter months.

Here are five ways you can safeguard your home for the winter season.

**1.Ensure carbon monoxide and smoke detectors are working properly.** If your detectors are battery-operated, replace the batteries annually. Test the detectors once a month and give them a good dusting to ensure the sensors are clear of dirt and debris.

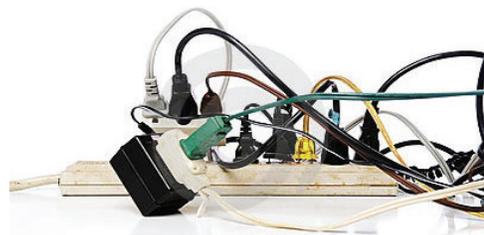
**2.Inspect electrical cords.** We depend on more cords during winter, whether for holiday lighting, extension cords or portable heaters. Before using any corded items, double check to make sure cords aren't frayed or cracked. If you use portable space heaters, remember to keep them at least 3 feet away from flammable items. Use models that include an auto shut-off feature and overheat protection. Space heaters can take a toll on your energy bills. Use them efficiently (to heat smaller spaces) and safely. Never plug a space heater into a power strip. Speaking of power strips...

**3.Avoid overloading electrical outlets and power strips.** When overloaded with electrical items, outlets and power strips can overheat and catch fire. If you use power strips for multiple devices, make sure the strip can handle the electrical load. For a safer bet, look for power strips that include surge protection.

**4.Clean the fireplace to improve safety and efficiency.** There's nothing better than a warm fire on a chilly night, but it's important to maintain your fireplace for safety. As wood burns, a sticky substance known as creosote builds up in the chimney. When creosote buildup becomes too thick, a chimney fire can ignite. The chimney should be cleaned at least once a year to reduce fire risks. Regular cleaning also improves air flow and limits the amount of carbon monoxide that seeps indoors.

**5.Practice safety in the kitchen.** As we spend more time in the kitchen during the holiday season, be mindful of potential fire hazards. Never leave food that's cooking on the stovetop unattended. Clean and remove spilled foods from cooking surfaces and be mindful of where you place flammable items like dish towels.

Columbus Electric Cooperative wants you and your family to stay safe during the winter season.



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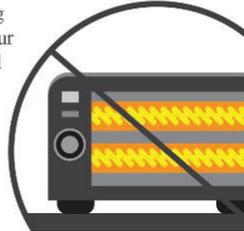




## TIPS TO DITCH THE SPACE HEATER

Space heaters are energy hogs, and older models can be extremely dangerous. This winter, ditch the space heater and try these alternative solutions to stay cozy.

- Use an electric blanket to keep warm during the night.
- Caulk and weatherstrip around all windows and doors to prevent heat loss.
- Consider adding insulation to your attic and around duct work.



Don't miss your chance to apply!

Columbus Electric Cooperative offers educational scholarships to active members of CEC and their immediate family members. Scholarship recipients can receive financial assistance for up to eight semesters of undergraduate studies at the college of their choice. Applicants must complete an application and submit letters of recommendation. Applications may be obtained by contacting our office, the student's high school counselor or at [columbusco-op.org/scholarships](http://columbusco-op.org/scholarships). The deadline to apply is March 4, 2024.

For questions, please call our office at 575-546-8838

*Scholarship Applications will be accepted beginning December 1, 2023 for the 2024-2025 school year.*



## Board Highlights

The Board of Trustees met on Tuesday, October 24<sup>th</sup>. Greg Gilbert of BSGM reviewed the 2023 Audit. There were no findings and Mr. Gilbert reported that the Cooperative was in good financial condition and in compliance with all lender requirements. The Board also reviewed and approved the 2022 IRS Form 990.



## Government-In-Action Youth Tour

Applications for the 2024 Government in action Youth Tour will be accepted beginning on December 1, 2023 for the 2024 once in a lifetime trip to Washington, D.C. Next year's trip is scheduled for June 17-21, 2024. Each year Columbus Electric Cooperative sponsors two high school students from our service area to attend the all-expense paid trip to learn about our nation's history, meet with members of congress and learn about electric cooperatives. Applications may be obtained by contacting our office, the student's high school counselor or at [columbusco-op.org](http://columbusco-op.org). The deadline to apply is January 31, 2024



Our office will be closed November 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> in observance of the Thanksgiving holiday. Wishing you a Safe and Happy Thanksgiving.

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

The holiday season is upon us, and that means we'll be using more energy in the kitchen. When possible, cook with smaller countertop appliances instead of the stovetop or oven. Smaller appliances like slow cookers, air fryers and Instant Pots consume less energy.

When using the oven or stovetop, match the size of the pot to the heating element and place a lid over the pot while cooking. The food will cook faster, and you'll use less energy.

Source: Dept. of Energy



Emergency Response Number  
1-800-228-0579

Toll - free Office Number  
1-800-950-COOP (2667)