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News Release

*For Immediate Release*

### **Space Heater Fires Keep Firefighters Busy**

Springfield firefighters have responded to three house fires in the last week caused by misuse of space heaters. On Jan. 14 on East Atlantic Street, a house burned when a resident used a space heater in the garage in an attempt to keep some stray cats warm. Space heaters are also blamed for two house fires on Thursday. The use of five space heaters overloaded the electric panel of a house on North Ramsey. The occupant was sleeping when a neighbor noticed the house was on fire. He alerted the resident, and she was able to make it out without injury. Also on Thursday, the electrical line of a home on South Florence overheated, causing a fire. Multiple space heaters were also in use in that house. There were no working smoke alarms in either home that caught on fire Thursday.

Fortunately, none of these fires resulted in injuries or deaths, but they do highlight the need to remind residents that space heaters can be extremely dangerous. Here are some tips to stay safe while using a space heater this winter:

- Make sure your space heater has an emergency shut off in case it tips over.
- Keep space heaters at least 3 feet away from anything that can burn, including clothes, furniture, and yourself!
- Never leave a space heater unattended.
- Plug space heaters directly into an electrical outlet and never use an extension cord which can overheat, resulting in a fire.
- Remember, overall, central heating is safer than space heaters.

The Springfield Fire Department also encourages homeowners to properly install and maintain their smoke alarms. There should be at least one alarm on every level of the house, including outside every sleeping area. Check alarm batteries at least once a month, and replace all alarms at least every 10 years. And remember to plan and practice home fire drills so every member of the home understands how to get out quickly if the alarm sounds. Springfield residents are eligible for one free smoke alarm by calling 864-1500.

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