

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Safety Awareness for Portable Space Heaters**

*Propane shortage drives up use*

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February 19, 2014—In conjunction with the National Fire Protection Association, ***Merrimac Lodi Mutual*** wants you to have a safe heating season. A shortage in liquid propane has left many homeowners looking for alternative heating. Although space heaters can be a viable option, space heaters need space. That's a key message from the nonprofit National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and the United States Fire Administration (USFA), who are teaming up to reduce the risk of home heating fires. Space heaters annually account for one-third of reported U.S. home heating fires, and four out of five associated civilian deaths.

As part of their joint fire safety campaign, "Put a Freeze on Winter Fires," NFPA and USFA urge everyone to practice extreme caution when using space heaters this season. Keep things that can burn at least three feet away from space heaters, and create a three-foot "kid-free zone" around them. Make sure to use equipment that has the label of a recognized testing laboratory, and have a qualified professional install stationary space heating equipment according to the local codes and manufacturer's instructions.

For portable electric heaters:

- Place them on a solid, flat surface.
- Maintain a 36 inch clearance from the space heater and anything that can burn.
- Turn them off when you go to bed or leave the room.
- Use and purchase heaters that carry the mark of an independent testing laboratory such as UL to make sure it is equipped with an automatic shut off so if they're tipped over they will shut off.
- Plug power cords directly into outlets and never into an extension cord.
- Inspect for cracked or damaged, broken plugs or loose connections; replace before using.

Winter fires are preventable! For more heating safety advice from NFPA and USFA's "Put a Freeze on Winter" campaign, visit [www.nfpa.org/winter](http://www.nfpa.org/winter).