

Hidden Fire and Health Risks in Your Home

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NewsWest 9

ODESSA - Forces threatening to start a fire and threatening your health can be found in your own home as the cold of winter sets in.



Defective heaters and furnaces can go up in flames if not cared for properly.

They can go up at any moment, as Bonham Junior High in Odessa found out Monday morning, when a blower motor in a heating unit burned up, pumping smoke into a classroom and forcing the school to evacuate.

Firefighters told NewsWest 9 to make sure your furnace is properly vented and to try to change or replace its filter three to four times a year.

They said a licensed plumber or electrician can take a look at it for you to make sure it's up to par.

Doctors said they see a new menace in winter: carbon monoxide poisoning.

"The incidences increase in winter because of gas furnaces, gas heaters, gas ranges, gas-powered stoves, so those are the things that you have to watch out for," Medical Center Hospital Emergency Physician, Dr. Sudip Bose, said.

Doctors said the gas can also come from fireplaces, so keep your chimneys swept.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is hard to pin down because it can feel like the flu, but there's a way you can tell the two apart.

"Carbon monoxide is often called 'The Great Mimicker', because it mimics many other diseases," Bose said. "Sometimes the only symptoms you get are headaches and nausea and just some dizziness, and there are lots of things that cause headache, nausea, and dizziness. The big clues with carbon monoxide poisoning are the fact that when you leave your home, you get better."

Doctors told NewsWest 9 flu-like symptoms in your home shouldn't cause you to run to the hospital. It could just be the flu.

But if you're worried it could be a carbon monoxide leak, just take that step outside for a while and see how you feel.

Doctors also recommend you get a carbon monoxide detector just in case.

Firefighters also told NewsWest 9 if you have a concern about your furnace, you can give them a call.

For the Odessa Fire Department, call (432) 257-0507.

For the Midland Fire Department, call (432) 685-7332.