



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## 'FIRE PREVENTION WEEK' OFFERS REMINDERS TO STAY SAFE

PATTY RITCHIE October 17, 2011

With the nights turning a little cooler, you may be planning to enjoy an evening curled up in front of your fireplace or wood-stove. It's one of the more enjoyable ways to spend a fall or winter night in Central and Northern New York.

Just keep in mind, between 2006 and 2008, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission reported 27,000 fires a year were traced to fireplaces and chimneys.

Local volunteers are using "Fire Prevention Week" to remind families to stay safe this winter, by inspecting your chimney or flue for leakage and blockage from creosote or other debris.

Burning wood is a popular way to heat our homes in Central and Northern New York, but firefighters point out that dangerous creosote can build up even faster in your flue or chimney if the wood you are burning isn't properly seasoned.

Seasoned wood needs to be cut and dried for six to 12 months before it's used in your wood-stove or fireplace. If you routinely burn wood that hasn't been seasoned, you need to frequently check your chimneys and flues because dangerous levels can build up without any warning. If creosote has built up above a quarter of an inch, it's time for a cleaning to prevent a dangerous chimney fire that could cost you your home.

With an estimated 386,000 residential fires a year, firefighters stress that families need to take steps to avoid the estimated 12,500 injuries and 2,400 deaths a year from fires. That's why the brave men and women who risk their lives on our behalf stress the importance of checking to make sure you have a working smoke detector on every floor of your home.

Smoke alarms can reduce the risk of dying in a fire by half, so don't take a chance. Your family and home are worth the price of a new battery for your smoke detector.

Across New York State, volunteer fire departments are looking for brave men and women to join their ranks to keep our communities safe. If you are interested in becoming one of the people who can be counted on to rush to the scene of a fire or emergency when others are running away, contact your county office of emergency services for information on how you can volunteer in your community.

In St. Lawrence County, call 379-2240.

In Jefferson County, call 786-2654.

In Oswego County, call 591-9150.