

Tips on using portable heaters

Government safety experts warn that half and one-third of the injuries resulting from portable electric heater fires occur when people use heaters overnight and the family is sleeping. If heaters must be used at night, a properly installed and maintained smoke detector in the same room may provide early warning of danger if a fire should occur.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates for 1985 indicate that fire departments responded to 3,700 residential fires involving portable electric heaters. These fires resulted in 160 deaths, 260 injuries and \$50.6 million in property loss.

CPSC suggests the following precautions for safe portable heater use:

Use heaters at least three feet away from objects such as bedding, furniture and drapes. Never use heaters to dry clothes or shoes. Do not place heaters where towels or other objects could fall on the heater and start a fire.

Use heaters on the floor. Never place heaters on furniture, since they

may fall, dislodging or breaking parts in the heater.

Do not use heaters in wet or moist places such as bathrooms, as parts in the heater may be damaged.

String out cords on top of rugs or floors. Placing anything on top of the cord could cause the cord to overheat.

Do not use an extension cord unless absolutely necessary. Using an extension cord with high wattage appliances can start a fire. If you must use an extension cord, it must be marked 14 or 12 AWG; this tells the thickness or gauge of the wire in the cord. For example, a cord sold as an air conditioner extension cord will have these heavy wires. Do not use a cord marked 16 or 18 AWG. Only use extension cords bearing the label of an independent testing laboratory such as U.L. or E.T.L.

Be sure the plug fits snugly in the outlet. Since a loose plug may overheat, have a qualified repairman replace the worn out plug or outlet. Since heaters draw lots of power, the

cord and plug may feel warm. But if the plug feels too hot to touch, unplug the heater and have a qualified repairman check for problems. If the heater and its plug are found to be working properly, have the outlet replaced. Using a heater with a hot cord or plug could start a fire.

If a heater is used on an outlet protected by a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) which trips, do not assume the GFCI is broken. Because GFCIs protect locations where leakage currents can cause a severe shock, stop using the heater and have it checked, even if it seems to be working properly.

Broken heaters should be checked and repaired by a qualified appliance service center. Do not attempt to repair, adjust or replace parts in the heater yourself.

To report a product-related accident, consumers may call the CPSC toll-free hotline at 800-638-2772. The teletypewriter line for the hearing impaired is 800-638-8270.



Local students from the high school are potting plants in the high school's greenhouse. The students are studying Agriculture, and the plants are for sale to area residents.

Farm losses lead to wildlife losses

Raleigh—North Carolina's economy and its farmers aren't the only losers in the increasing battle to keep the family farm alive. The state's wildlife—especially small game—is suffering too.

In recent years, wildlife biologists and managers and small-game hunters in this state, and throughout the southeast, have been asking themselves, "Where have all the rabbits and quail gone?" Now, they're getting some answers.

"In North Carolina, we need to worry about whether we're losing a lot of our traditional farm land, especially in the Piedmont, because farmers can't afford to stay in business," said Terry Sharpe, small-game project leader for the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission. "In the past, we've taken advantage of the fact that small-game has been a natural by-product of agriculture since most farm land provides good cover for small animals...especially quail and rabbits. Now, we're going to have to develop a new philosophy...as farming goes, so goes small-game."

Last month, small-game experts from 13 southeastern states came to North Carolina at the invitation of Gov. James G. Martin and the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission to discuss the decline of small-game populations.

"We know there have been popula-

tion declines and changes in hunting pressure since more people are hunting deer," Sharpe said. "But the people who still hunt small game, live for it."

"Years ago, people could hunt small game in their back yard," he said. "Now, they have deer in their back yards. Deer are just more plentiful, and many hunters are going to spend their time hunting whatever will make them successful."

"We found out our problems are even more similar than we imagined," Sharpe said of North Carolina's neighboring states. "We agreed that to manage high small-game populations, we have to do something to disturb the soil...such as controlled burning, plowing, farming, and cutting back bushes."

During the Southeast Small Game Workshop held in August at Carolina Power and Light's Environmental Center near Raleigh, more than 100 biologists and wildlife managers exchanged ideas on how to restore rabbit and quail populations.

Brad Mueller of the Tall Timber Research Station in Florida, said changes in land uses make it difficult for small-game hunters to find their resource.

"If you go to a place where you used to hunt quail, and there's a subdivision on it, you'll see your small-game problem," Mueller said. "We're also finding higher popula-

tions of small-game predators. We've got the techniques for better managing land. We've just got to use them," Sharpe agreed.

"For rabbits, research shows they need a wide variety of cover," he said. "Farmers and other landowners need to try to provide such cover as honeysuckle and blackberry."

"Food plots are a part, but not the complete answer for the quail problem. We need to look at each farm individually. District biologists in North Carolina are available to give advice to people who want to manage their land for wildlife. We may see a new attitude—the person who works for quail on his land will have it. But, I'm afraid that may price a lot of people out of quail hunting."

Billy Minser of the University of Tennessee said "No-till" farming helps to save cover for small wildlife.

During an address last week to members of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies in Winston-Salem, Gov. Martin hailed the no-till farm practice as an ideal way to manage wildlife and prevent soil erosion.

"We don't anticipate any miracles or immediate solutions," Martin said of the cooperative efforts from southeastern states. "But we are very hopeful that this workshop and studies that are developed through it will lead us to solutions that can help restore our small game populations."

Gatekeeper program outlined

North Carolina Power and the North Carolina Division of Aging have formed a joint program to help make many of the state's elderly a little more secure.

Under the program known as Gatekeeper, company meter readers will team with local agencies to determine when elderly customers may need help.

The public-private effort, based on a model project operating in Washington state, was announced at a news conference in Raleigh by Phillip J. Kirk, Jr., Chief of Staff to Governor James G. Martin; David T. Flaherty, Secretary of the Department of Human Resources; and James R. Frazier, Jr., North Carolina Power Vice President. Representatives of the state's other major electric utilities—Duke, CP&L and Nantahala Power—announced plans to implement pilot Gatekeeper programs in their respective service areas.

Noting that the program is known as Gatekeeper because utility em-

ployees will "open the gates" between older citizens and sources of assistance, Kirk praised the effort.

"The utility companies are instituting the Gatekeeper Program in regions they serve," he said. "This is a great public service to our older adults and their families and I thank you (utility companies) from the bottom of my heart. We in state government cannot do everything for our growing population of older adults. We welcome the assistance of the private sector."

Flaherty praised the public spirit of the companies involved, saying that they are showing their concern for their neighbors. "Good neighbors watch out for each other," he said.

Frazier said that North Carolina Power is pleased to be working with the North Carolina Division of Aging in offering this service to the company's senior citizen customers. "We view the Gatekeeper program as another opportunity to show our concern for the neighborhoods we serve," he said.

Since North Carolina Power serves

a majority of the elderly population in Northeastern North Carolina, the company is in a unique position to act as a link between participating senior citizens and local agencies. "Our meter readers make regular visits to every home in every community we serve," Frazier said. "They get to know the neighborhoods they work in and the folks who live there."

As part of the program, the utility company is training its meter readers to be especially alert for signs of distress and neglect—piled up mail or newspapers, unkept lawns, broken windows or anything else out of the ordinary. If they notice something unusual, they report it to local agency officials so they can investigate.

Senior citizens who want to participate in the program can enroll by filling out one of the Gatekeeper enrollment cards being sent out with North Carolina Power bills in October. Others who know of a senior citizen who could benefit from the program are also invited to fill out and return one of the forms.

Little bulbs suggested for gardens

LITTLE BULBS

N.C. Botanical Garden
When making decisions about next spring's blooms, specialists at the N.C. Botanical Garden at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill say gardeners should consider adding "little bulbs" to their usual favorites.

Little bulbs are low-growing plants with miniature blossoms, good color variety and the potential for a four-

month blooming season.

The advantage of planting the little bulbs is that they are exceptional for close viewing. Beside a wooded path, at a gate or doorway and in rock gardens, they beg to be examined. By choosing varieties by blooming dates, it is possible to have these little blossoms in the garden from January until mid-April.

Yellow winter aconites bloom in January. The blossoms face upward with green leaves acting as a frame. The flowers last up to two weeks, but the foliage is attractive until May. If the location agrees with these bulbs, they will reseed and naturalize.

Crocuses start blooming in January and early February. The more familiar, later blooming varieties are Dutch crocuses. There also are species crocuses, called snow crocuses, that have twice as many blossoms as the Dutch type and multiply faster. By combining the snow species and the Dutch types, it is possible to have two months of crocus blooms.

Miniature hyacinths are known as Roman hyacinths. The pink and white types bloom first, the blue varieties in March. For bulbs that are clear blue, the choice is Siberian squill, with one to three starlike blossoms on 6-inch stems.

In March the Dutch crocuses bloom, as well as the Greek anemones and grape hyacinths. Other little bulbs that bloom include miniature daffodils, the native wild flowers of the Piedmont, Erythronium or dog-toothed violets, the varieties of small iris and the later atamasco lilies.

These cheery little bulbs will add to the spring garden.

DID YOU KNOW?

• Currently there are more than 50,000 nuclear weapons in existence. The U.S. nuclear testing program costs about \$700 million a year. More than \$100 billion has been spent on nuclear weapons development.

• The U.S. House of Representatives has already voted to end nuclear testing as long as the Soviets don't test. Satellite and on-site monitoring technology makes the test-ban verifiable.



• 42 of our underground tests have vented radiation into the atmosphere. Fallout from one test in Nevada was detected in Minnesota and Canada as reported in a House Commerce Committee study.

• Right now Congress is debating the nuclear testing issue. Legislators are watching their mail carefully. If you have an opinion, send a letter or postcard to your Senator, U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510.

If you haven't thought about it, why not look into more of the facts for yourself. You can obtain information on nuclear testing by writing West Side SANE/Freeze, 165 W. 86th St., New York, N.Y. 10024.

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