Town of Penfield Supervisor’s Column
January 29, 2019

Supervisor’s guest column from the Building, Zoning, and Fire Marshal Office

We enjoyed a mild start to winter but this week promises to bring dangerously low temperatures to the region with a brutal Arctic blast. With this in mind, we would like to share the following winter safety information with Penfield residents.

Many families will turn to portable heating sources to add more warmth to their homes this week because they can quickly warm a small space. Our department would like to stress that safety is a top consideration when using space heaters. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that more than 25,000 residential fires every year are associated with the use of space heaters, resulting in more than 300 deaths. In addition, an estimated 6,000 people receive hospital emergency room care for burn injuries associated with contacting the hot surfaces of room heaters, mostly in non-fire situations. And remember, it is NEVER safe to heat a home with an electric or gas oven. They are only designed for cooking—not heating—and pose fire and safety risks when used to heat homes.

If you plan to use space heaters please take a moment to review this important safety information from energy.gov (https://www.energy.gov/energysaver/home-heating-systems/portable-heaters)

RG&E has also provided the following winter safety tips (www.rge.com):

*Keep Electric and Natural Gas Meters Clear of Snow and Ice*

Snow and ice accumulation may interfere with the operation of electric and natural gas meters and regulators, or may slow access in case of an emergency. Snow removal activities can also pose a hazard to natural gas meter assemblies or piping, and result in a dangerous leak. Snow should not be pushed or piled around electric or natural gas meters. Also, take care when operating snow blowers or plows around all meters to avoid damage. Electric and natural gas meters and regulators should be kept clear of snow and ice by using a broom or by hand – not a shovel. Should a meter become encased in ice, or begin to make an unusual noise, customers should please call RG&E at 800.743.1701.

*Watch for Falling Ice or Snow*

Homeowners should be alert to potential ice build-up on rooftops. Falling ice and snow can damage utility meters or regulators. Homeowners can contact qualified roofing contractors for safe removal of snow and ice accumulation above utility meters and regulators.

*Keep Appliance Vents Clear of Snow and Ice*

Beware of exhaust getting trapped by snow around an appliance sidewall outside vent from a natural gas appliance. If a vent is obstructed, the appliance may shut down or malfunction and create a potentially hazardous condition, such as a dangerous build-up of carbon monoxide. All equipment outside vents should be kept clear of snow and ice.

*Contact RG&E if You Smell an Odor of Natural Gas*

If you suspect a natural gas leak, get up, get out, and get away! Then immediately call RG&E at 800.743.1702 or 911 from a safe location.

Perhaps you are getting through these winter days dreaming of warm weather and a new pool, deck, or spa. You may be looking forward to storing your snow blower and shovels in a new shed. Cabin fever may inspire a home or garage addition for a little more space for your family and things. If so, now’s the time to contact our office to get your project off to a successful start. Find out what type of projects require permits; learn about setbacks, construction and inspection requirements; and ask any questions you may have to get your plan started. Get ahead of the warm weather spike in permit applications and submit your documents as soon as possible!

If you find yourself indoors and decluttering this winter you may be considering a spring garage sale. Please call us to learn all you need to know about temporary signs to be sure people see your signs and find your sale. And if you have items to dispose of that are not fit for sale or donation, mark your calendar for Spring Drop-off at Penfield DPW on May 17 & 18.

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We are happy to take your calls at 340-8636 and address your questions and concerns about fire safety; building, pool, shed, spa and other permits; inspections; code enforcement; garage sales; and any other topic on your mind. You can also visit us on the second floor at the town hall, 3100 Atlantic Avenue.

One last word on the cold weather on behalf of all family pets...if it’s too cold for you, it’s too cold for your pets! Too much time outdoors and poor shelter can threaten pets’ lives. Frigid temperatures and salt can damage paws. Like humans, pets also suffer skin conditions from cold dry air. If you would like to learn more about keeping indoor and outdoor pets safe visit the Humane Society of Greater Rochester’s website at www.lollypop.org/humane-law-enforcement/winter-weather-pet-safety/

Lastly, please check on elderly neighbors and remember to keep your entire neighborhood safe by clearing snow from fire hydrants.

Stay warm and safe!

Town of Penfield Building, Zoning and Fire Marshal Department

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