

HINTS FOR HOMEOWNERS

Don't Give Fire Safety The Cold Shoulder

(NAPSA)—Many people will soon be heading indoors to warm up in front of the fireplace or a heater. Others will enjoy watching the twinkling lights on their Christmas trees or eating dinner by candlelight.

Unfortunately, without the proper care and preparation, these seasonal treats can pose serious threats to your home.

More than one-third of all home fires occur between the months of November and February, according to reports by the U.S. Fire Administration. These fires cause thousands of deaths and nearly \$3 billion in damage each year. Studies found the leading causes of these fires are heating sources.

A fire doesn't have to completely destroy a home to cause serious and costly damage. Experts from ServiceMaster Clean—a leading disaster restoration company—say smoke and soot can damage walls, floors, furniture and electronics. Removing soot and smoke marks from surfaces takes more than just simple soap and water.

Pete Duncanson, director of training for ServiceMaster Clean, suggests the following tips for preventing and removing smoke and soot damage from your home:

- Clean space heaters and fireplaces—Heaters and fireplaces need to be cleaned properly prior to use each season. Gas fireplace logs should be vacuumed to



Using water and hand soap on soot marks can make the problem worse. Try a dry, chemical sponge and an alkaline cleaner.

remove any dust or dirt that accumulate on them during the off-season. Keep space heaters at least three feet from rugs, curtains, furniture and other flammable objects.

- Prevent puffbacks—Puffbacks can cause a sudden deposition of soot and oily grime on everything inside a home. Have your furnace cleaned and checked annually. Also change filters regularly.

- Remove soot marks on walls and ceilings from fireplaces and candles—Soot marks from fireplaces and candles should be removed carefully. Using water and hand soap can make the problem worse. Soot will easily smear on walls with flat paint. Remove marks with a dry, chemical sponge and an alkaline cleaner.

To learn more, visit the Web site at www.servicemasterclean.com.