

State of Idaho
DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE

C.L. "BUTCH" OTTER
Governor

700 West State Street, 3rd Floor
P.O. Box 83720
Boise, Idaho 83720-0043
Phone (208)334-4250
Fax (208)334-4398
Website: <http://www.doi.idaho.gov>

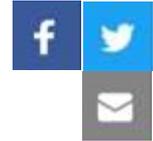
DEAN L. CAMERON
Director

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Contact: Tricia Carney 208-334-4312 or 208-850-2342

Tricia.carney@doi.idaho.gov



Snow damage found to be origin of Council fire

BOISE ID – Last Tuesday morning, firefighters in Council were awakened by a frantic call about a fire at a local business. Fire damage was contained to a storage room with smoke damage throughout the building. But, this is where the story takes a dramatic turn.

Investigators from the Idaho State Fire Marshal's Office responded to the scene to determine the origin and cause of the fire. A security video confirmed the suspicions of investigators by revealing how easily this incident could have turned deadly and how it could have been avoided.

"Many parts of Idaho have received record-breaking snowfall since mid-December. Roof collapses have dominated the media, especially in the lower treasure valley," said Idaho State Fire Marshal Knute Sandahl. "Many home and business owners have taken proactive measures to remove snow and ice from their roofs. This particular business owner did just that. Unfortunately, the excess snow from the roof piled along the back side of the building and, unintentionally, against the propane gas pipe to the building."

The added weight and shifting of the snow pile caused the pipe to crack, not only on the exterior of the building, but also inside the wall, allowing propane to fill the building.

The [security video](#) shows a worker checking the pilot light on the hot water heater after smelling propane when she opened up the business. She then leaves the storage room, and approximately two and a half minutes later the propane ignites and begins to burn at the wall where the broken pipe was located. "This unfortunate incident is an excellent and dramatic example of the importance of protecting your propane or natural gas meters, piping, and regulators from snow accumulation," Sandahl said.

Sandahl offers these additional safety recommendations for home and business owners:

- Walk around the perimeter of your home during and after snowfall and check for blocked vent pipes. Furnaces, dryers, and other flame-heated appliances are often vented to the

outside through walls. Blocked vent pipes could cause deadly amounts of carbon monoxide to build up inside your home or building.

- A carbon monoxide detector is always a must if your house or building has any appliance heated by flame.
- Have flame-heated appliances checked and inspected regularly by a qualified technician. Loose fittings, cracks in piping, and other issues can be found and corrected before a tragedy occurs.
- Finally, if you happen to smell natural gas or propane, leave the building and call 911 from outside or from a neighbor's home.

About the Department of Insurance

The Idaho Department of Insurance has been regulating the business of insurance in Idaho since 1901. The mission of the Department is to equitably, effectively and efficiently administer the Idaho Insurance Code and the International Fire Code. For more information, visit www.doi.idaho.gov.

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