

Precautions necessary for those in winter cottages

Many people vacationing in snow-country stay in cottages and cabins that aren't really set up for winter conditions.

Heating and cooking systems in isolated areas are of ten propane fueled. Whether you're roasting chestnuts on an open fire or cooking a roast in a propane oven, a few suggestions for the proper use of fuel-burning appliances and heating systems can help make your vacation safer.

"Many people don't think a fireplace can be dangerous," says Michael Philip, director of fuels-safety with Ontario's Consumer Ministry. "But any fuel-burning system that's not operating properly can become a source of deadly carbon-monoxide gas."

Carbon monoxide is produced when a fuel isn't burning cleanly. In a fireplace, a damper closed before the fire is fully extinguished can release carbon monoxide into the home.

Carbon monoxide is a colourless, odorless gas produced during combustion. Symptoms of carbon-monoxide poisoning include headaches, nausea, dizziness and fatigue. The results can be brain damage, physical disability or death.

If you're staying in a dwelling with a fireplace, Phillip says you should verify that the chimney has been cleaned within the year.

"Also, make sure the fire is receiving enough air for it to burn well by leaving a nearby window slightly ajar," he says.

Teach children that a fireplace is not a plaything. Only newspaper, dry kindling and well-seasoned wood should be burned.

Proper fireplace equipment, including tools, a spark screen, smoke detectors and a Class "A" fire extinguisher should be on hand. If they aren't, make a trip to town before you strike a match.

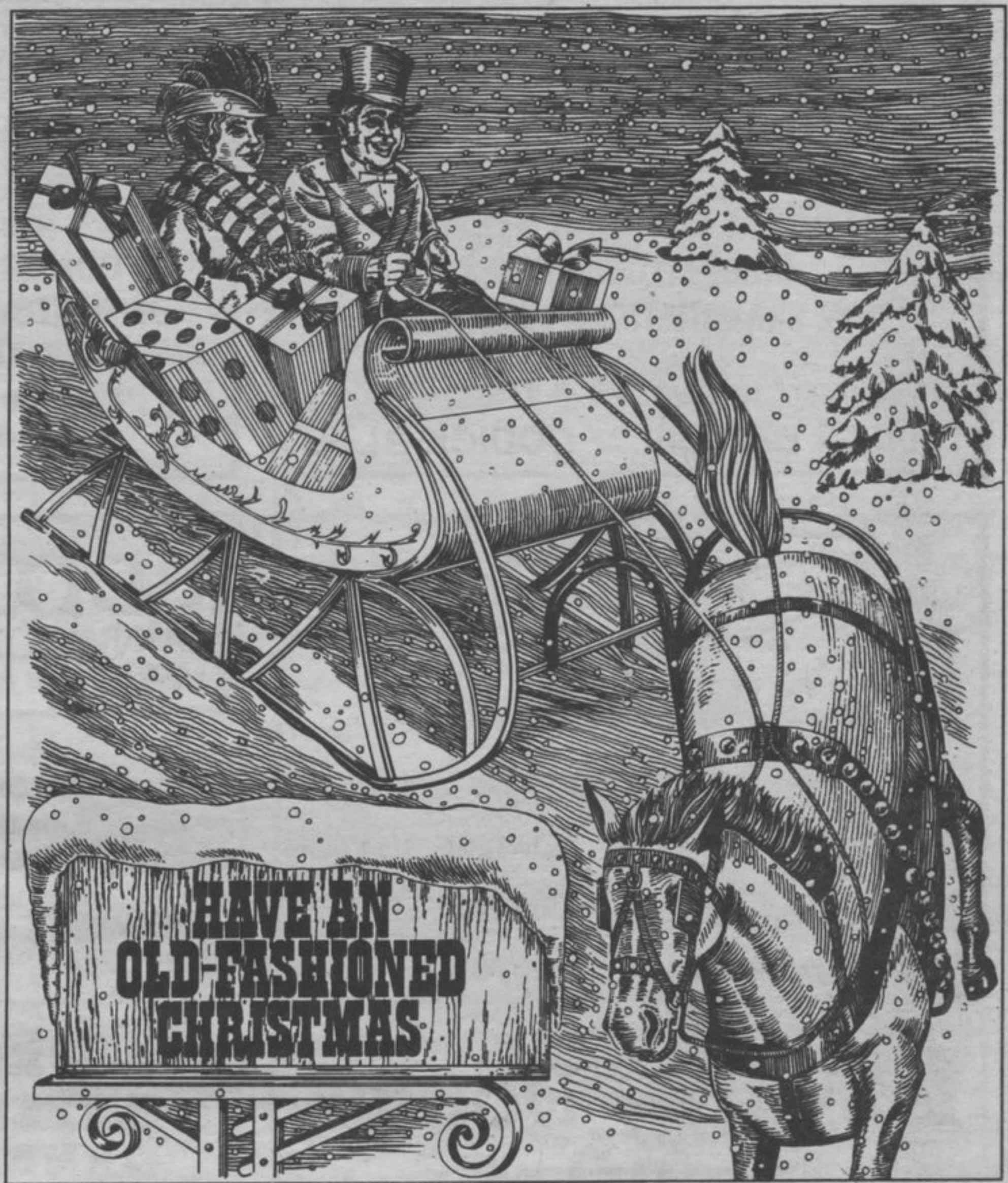
Many cottages are equipped with propane appliances. make sure the propane refrigerator has been serviced within the year, by a certified propane fitter. Servicing is very important because lethal quantities of carbon monoxide can be produced by a refrigerator flame that is improperly adjusted or partially blocked by dirt.

Propane refrigerators that vent inside a building are so dangerous the Fuels Safety Branch banned their sale and installation in Ontario. The

only type that may now be installed vents directly to the outdoors. If the cabin or chalet you're staying in still contains an old indoor-venting model, turn it off.

Regular servicing will also reduce risk of malfunction on propane stoves, which could result in carbon-monoxide poisoning or fuel leaks.

If you open the valve on a propane tank that is hooked up to an appliance and notice a "rotten cabbage" smell, it means propane is leaking. Quickly close the valve and don't flick any switches—you could cause a spark. Open the doors and windows and get everybody outside until long after the smell is gone.



Ask a Conservation Officer It's Our Nature.

What kind of training must a CO have?

In the beginning, a CO's "training" consisted of a love of wildlife and the outdoors. And the basic requirements were to be "gentlemen of good nature", be strong and have an aptitude for rugged living. That was in the late 1800s.

Needless to say, the times have changed. Today the requirements and training are more stringent, but the fundamental idea of conservation has not changed.

Along with basic physical and educational requirements usually acquired at a community college, each CO learns about the protection of habitat and wildlife. All courses have been carefully designed and are monitored by MNR.

Courses include: firearm identification and marksmanship (with each CO's abilities updated and tested each year); law enforcement (including management and investigative skills); workshops on a variety of subjects from commercial fishing enforcement to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms; water safety including vessel operation and navigation as well as

ice and water techniques (these get an officer out of the classroom and literally into the water); wilderness survival is very important as more recruits are hired directly from school and have little bush survival knowledge. And there's more.

Said Aubrey Gostlin, one of the first COs to instruct at the Ontario Police College, "We have the best trained officers in North America... maybe even the world."

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Remembered daily by Daughter Donna & son-in-law Wilfred & family.



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