



HOLIDAY TIPS

Christmas Safety!

The holidays are wonderful, but they are also a time of stress, rushing around and changes in routine. From driving home from late-night parties to cooking up a feast, many of us find ourselves doing things we don't normally do.

That's why there's no better time than now to start spreading the word throughout our community.

According to the NFPA, U.S. fire departments responded to an average 250 home fires started with Christmas trees per year. And Christmas tree fires are more deadly than other fires. One of every 32 reported home fires that began with a Christmas tree resulted in a death, compared to an average of one death per 143 total reported home fires.

Consider an artificial tree. They're not only safer, but more environmentally friendly — and you can select color, size, and decorations easily.

Water fresh trees daily. Regular watering makes a huge difference. A dried-out tree progresses to flashover in less than a minute, while a regularly watered tree burns at a much slower rate.

Inspect tree lights, cords and other electrical equipment carefully before using them on or near a tree. Electrical distribution or lighting equipment was involved in 40 percent of home Christmas tree fires.

Keep heat sources far away from Christmas trees. In 26 percent of the Christmas tree fires and in 80 percent of the related deaths, some type of heat source, such as a candle or equipment, was too close to the tree.

Holiday Decorations

Decorating the house is a family tradition for many of us, but it can be deadly. U.S. fire departments responded to an average of 840 home structure fires per year that began with decorations, excluding Christmas trees.

Choose flame-resistant decorations

Keep decorations far away from heat sources such as space heaters and candles. Nearly half of decoration fires happen because the decorations are too close to a heat source.

Hang lights with clips, not nails, to reduce damage to the cords.

Don't use indoor-only lights outdoors.

Hang decorations securely, and ensure they are out of the way of highly trafficked areas in your house. Decoration-related falls or trips accounted for 7,500 ER visits in November and December.

Use extra caution in the kitchen. Decorations don't mix well with the range. More than 20 percent of decoration fires start in the kitchen.

Unplug all lights and electrical decorations before going to bed or leaving the house.

Candles

Candles are a risk any time of year, but the danger increases during the holidays, most likely because people are more likely to light them. More than 55 percent of the December home decoration fires were started by candles, compared to 32 percent in other months.

Use flameless candles. I've said it before and I'll say it again: if you frequently burn candles, it's time to consider the flameless variety. They come in all sorts of styles and sizes, they last longer and they give you something priceless: The peace of mind that you're not going to inadvertently cause a home fire with a candle.

If you must use traditional candles, locate them on sturdy surfaces using proper candleholders or plates to capture falling wax.

Always extinguish candles before going to bed or leaving the house. Don't leave candles unattended.

Ensure decorations, drapes and other things that can burn cannot come into contact with candles.

Keep matches and lighters in a cabinet children cannot access.

Holiday Cooking

Cooking equipment causes an average of more than 500 civilian deaths per year

Keep decorations away from the range. Cooking equipment was involved in 19 percent of home decoration fires. This can happen when a decoration is left on or too close to a stove or other cooking equipment.

When you've started cooking, stay in the kitchen. Unattended cooking is by far the leading contributor to cooking equipment fires.

Keep young children out of the kitchen or ensure they're closely supervised. From cords to open flames to knives, there's just too much that can go wrong unless you're able to closely watch children in the kitchen.

Check food regularly and use a timer to remind you when dishes may be nearing completion or need to be checked.

So, there you have it: "Four to Watch Out For."

Happy Holidays!

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