



## **Holiday Safety**

The winter holidays are a time for celebration and also can be a time for increased risk of fire. In the United States nearly 600 fires per year have been started by ignition of Christmas trees (510 in homes), causing an average of 33 deaths (all in homes), 112 injuries, and \$21 million in direct property damage per annually. Decorating with candles can also be a fire hazard. Candles cause annual averages of 6,700 home fires, with 87 associated deaths and 587 injuries. Nearly \$59 million in property damage results from candle fires every year. Follow these fire prevention tips to help keep your family safe during the holidays:

### **Holiday Entertaining**

#### **Cooking**

Cooking fires are the number one cause of home fires and home injuries. The leading cause of fires in the kitchen is unattended cooking. It's important to be alert to prevent cooking fires.

- Be on alert! If you are sleepy or have consumed alcohol don't use the stove or stovetop.
- Stay in the kitchen while you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.
- If you are simmering, baking, roasting, or boiling food, check it regularly, remain in the home while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you that you are cooking.
- Keep anything that can catch fire — oven mitts, wooden utensils, food packaging, towels or curtains — away from your stovetop.

#### **If you have a cooking fire**

- Just get out! When you leave, close the door behind you to help contain the fire.
- Call **9-1-1** or the local emergency number after you leave.
- If you try to fight the fire, be sure others are getting out and you have a clear way out.

- Keep a lid nearby when you're cooking to smother small grease fires. Smother the fire by sliding the lid over the pan and turn off the stovetop. Leave the pan covered until it is completely cooled.
- For an oven fire turn off the heat and keep the door closed.

## **Candles**

Remember, a candle is an open flame, which means that it can easily ignite anything that can burn.

- Keep candles at least 12 inches away from anything that can burn.
- Avoid the use of candles in the bedroom and other areas where people may fall asleep.
- Blow out all candles when you leave the room or go to bed.
- Think about using flameless candles in your home. They look and smell like real candles.

### **If you do burn candles, make sure that you...**

- Use candle holders that are sturdy and won't tip over easily.
- Put candle holders on a sturdy, uncluttered surface.
- Light candles carefully. Keep your hair and any loose clothing away from the flame.
- Don't burn a candle all the way down — put it out before it gets too close to the holder or container.
- Never use a candle if oxygen is used in the home.
- Have flashlights and battery-powered lighting ready to use during a power outage. Never use candles.

## **Christmas Trees**

- Avoid placing tree in an area close to heating appliances or fireplaces. This will not only dry the tree out prematurely, but can also increase the chance of accidental ignition.
- Choose a fresh Christmas tree and a stand designed not to tip over.
- Cut at least ½ inch from the trunk of the tree before placing it in the stand to keep the tree from drying out prematurely.
- Keep the tree out of high traffic areas and away from stairways and doors.
- NEVER block an exit with a tree.
- Secure the tree so that pets or a small child cannot knock it over.
- Make sure to check the water level daily. Hint-A six foot tree will use one gallon of water every two days.

- If you purchase an artificial tree, be sure it is labeled as fire-retardant.
- For Christmas trees to be displayed in commercial, office buildings, or stores, trees must be treated with an approved flame retardant.

## Tree and Decorations

- Check lights for broken or cracked sockets. Make sure that all connections are tight and the bulbs and cords are in good condition. Replace any frayed or damaged cords.
- When decorating with lights; be sure to purchase only those that bear the mark of a testing laboratory (example-UL).
- Be able to turn off the lights without having to crawl under the tree.
- The use of the small or mini lights has a lesser risk of drying the tree out and causing a fire than the larger bulbs.
- Do not connect more than three strands of lights-end to end. Each strand has a fuse and if you connect more than three strands, you run the risk of blowing the fuse, causing them not to work. For trees that need more than 3 strands, an extension cord can offer another connection.
- When shopping for Christmas tree ornaments, attempt to find ones that are flame resistant.
- For outside decorations, use only lights labeled for “outdoor” use. Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, house walls, or other supports to prevent damage from the weather. Use plastic ties or insulated staples, not nails or tacks to attach the lights.
- Turn off all lights when no one is home or at night before bed.
- For added electric shock protection, plug outdoor electric lights and decorations into circuits protected by ground fault circuit interrupters.
- Bring outdoor lights inside following the holidays so they are not damaged by extended exposure to harsh weather conditions.

## When To Remove The Tree

- Remove the tree as soon as possible after Christmas. Dispose of all papers and boxes at once, do not allow them to accumulate.
- The Fire Department recommends that a tree be removed as soon as possible after Christmas and/or once it becomes dry and begins shedding needles.
- **NEVER** burn a tree in a fireplace to dispose of it. Dried out Christmas trees burn very hot and extremely quick. The fire may rapidly leave the fireplace and move into the room. A Christmas tree is very oily and may also damage your fireplace.