



North Florida Safety Council, Inc.

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A Non-Governmental, Not-for-profit, Public Safety & Health Organization

Holiday Home Fire Safety Message

With the fun filled holiday season quickly approaching comes a need to take safety precautions around the home. Whether it is ensuring the Christmas tree is properly watered, hanging fire-safe ornaments, or not overloading electrical outlets, there are a number of steps you can take to avoid a holiday disaster. The Northeast Florida Safety Council encourages all Floridians and their families to take every precaution to ensure the holiday season is one that is safe and happy.

A very important holiday tip that should be followed all year long is to make sure that smoke alarms are working and that there is one on every level of the house. Single level homes and apartments should have smoke alarms near the kitchen and all sleeping areas.

Here are a few simple safety tips to keep your home fire-safe during the holidays:



The Christmas Tree

- When purchasing a real tree, check for freshness by tapping it on the ground – dropping needles, indicate a dry, highly flammable tree. Needles should be hard to pull from branches and when bent between your fingers, they do not break.
- When purchasing an artificial tree, make sure it's 'fire resistant.' Although this label does not mean the tree won't catch fire, the tree will resist burning and should extinguish quickly.
- Place your tree away from fireplaces and heaters. Also, heated rooms dry out fresh trees, so be sure to keep the stand filled with water by topping it up daily.
- Never use lighted candles on or near the tree.
- Remove a real tree within 10 to 14 days; otherwise it can start to dry out and pose a fire hazard.



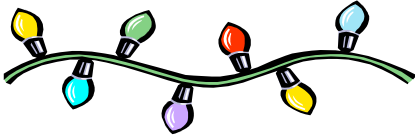
The Fireplace

- Ensure the chimney flue is open and clean before you light a fire.
- Remove all decorations that could be burned around the fireplace, such as stockings.
- Always use a screen in front of the fireplace to protect against flying sparks.
- Do not burn wrapping papers in the fireplace. A flash fire may result, as wrappings ignite suddenly and burn intensely.
- Never leave the fire unattended or let it smolder.
- Do not use Christmas trees for firewood. Only use seasoned and dried wood.



Decorations

- Choose decorations that are fire-resistant, non-combustible and non-conductive.
- Avoid using tinsel together with spray-on snowflakes. This combination is highly combustible.
- Do not use metallic ornaments on the tree. If they make contact with defective wiring they could become a shock hazard.



Lights

Christmas is a time of year when many people unwittingly place their family and possessions at risk because they don't take the time to first inspect their strings of lights before decorating their homes. To help make your home safer this holiday season, here is how to make sure your Christmas lights are safe for using--and a few other safety tips as well. Follow them and you should have a worry-free Christmas season--at least as far as your lighting goes!

- For conventional holiday lighting, use only UL (Underwriters Laboratories) approved lights. Consider using Energy Star Approved LED Holiday lights that use 90% less energy and that can provide up to 50,000 hours of bulb life.
- Place indoor and outdoor lights in their respective environments.
- New or old, check light strings for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections, and throw out damaged sets. Make sure you do this before putting lights up. It is much easier to replace bulbs on the ground, than on the roof.
- Do not use electric light strings/sets on metallic trees. A faulty system could energize the tree and shock or electrocute anyone coming into contact.
- Turn off all lights when you go to bed or leave the house. The lights could short out and start a fire.
- Do not overload electrical outlets, and never string more than three sets of lights per single extension cord.



Candles

- Never leave burning candles unattended, and always keep out of reach of children.
- Keep candles in sturdy holders on a stable surface, well away from curtains, trees or any other potentially flammable objects.
- Put out all candles before leaving the room or going to sleep.



The Kitchen

- Never leave your cooking unattended.
- Avoid wearing loose clothing while cooking.
- Make sure items that can catch fire, such as paper towels, are kept away from the stove.
- Use a timer to remind you that the stove or oven is on when roasting or baking food.
- In case of a fire, never turn on the overhead fan - this could spread the fire.

- If a fire starts and can't be quickly put out, leave your home and immediately call the fire department from a safe location.

North Florida Safety Council wishes you a Safe and Happy Holiday Season!