



## Be Fire Safe This Holiday Season

*Water Christmas trees daily and give candles and portable heaters space*

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When most people think about the holidays, family festivals and good cheer with friends likely come to mind. What few of us consider is that the holidays also present an increased risk of home fires. Home fires during the holiday season often involve **Candles, Christmas trees, holiday decorations and space heaters**. By taking some preventative steps, using common sense and following some simple rules, most home fires can be prevented during the holidays and beyond.

### **Candles**

- Candles are widely used in homes throughout the holidays; December is the peak month for home candle fires.
- More than half of all candle fires start because the candles had been too close to things that could catch fire.
- When burning candles, keep them at least 1-foot away from anything that can burn (create a 1-foot circle of safety), and remember to blow them out when you leave the room or go to bed.
- Use candle holders that are sturdy, won't tip over and are placed on uncluttered surfaces. Avoid using candles in the bedroom, where two of five U.S. candle fires begin, or other areas where people may fall asleep.
- Never leave a child or pets alone in a room with a burning candle.
- Consider using flameless candles, which look and smell like real candles.

## Christmas Trees

- U.S. fire departments annually respond to an average of 250 structure fires caused by Christmas trees. Nearly half of them are caused by electrical problems, and one in four resulted from a heat source that's too close to the tree.
- If you have an artificial tree, be sure it's labeled, certified or identified by the manufacturer as fire-retardant. If you choose a fresh tree, make sure the green needles don't fall off when touched; before placing it in the stand, cut 1-2" from the base of the trunk. Add water to the tree stand and be sure to water it daily.
- Make sure your tree is not blocking an exit and is at least three feet away from any heat source, like fireplaces, space heaters, radiators, candles and heat vents or lights.
- Use lights that have the label of an independent testing laboratory, and make sure you know whether they are designed for indoor or outdoor use. Replace any string of lights with worn or broken cords, or loose bulb connections. Connect no more than three strands of mini-string sets and a maximum of 50 bulbs for screw-in bulbs.
- Never use lit candles to decorate the tree.
- Always turn off Christmas tree lights before leaving the home or going to bed.
- After Christmas, get rid of the tree. Dried-out trees are a fire hazard and should not be left in the home or garage or placed outside the home.
- Bring outdoor electrical lights inside after the holidays to prevent hazards and make them last longer.

## Space Heaters

- Half of all home heating fires occur during the months of December, January and February.
- Keep anything that can burn at least 3-feet from all heat sources including space heaters, fireplaces, wood stoves and radiators.
- Turn off space heaters when you leave the room or go to bed.
- Space heaters, stoves and ovens are **not** designed as primary heating appliances.
- Always plug a space heater directly into a wall outlet. Never use an extension cord or power strip.
- Select a space heater that has the label of a nationally recognized testing laboratory (e.g. U.L.) and select a space heater that turns off automatically if it tips over.
- If you or someone you know is having difficulty paying a heating bill during the months of November through March, contact your local utility or call 2-1-1 to determine eligibility for a Winter Protection Plan or financial assistance and avoid a service shut-off.

**E.S.C.A.P.E. Fire Safety** reminds you by following these simple yet important safety tips, everyone in your family will have a “fire-safe” holiday season!

For more holiday fire safety tips, visit [www.escapeinc.org](http://www.escapeinc.org) or call toll free 1-844-978-4400.