



FIRE MARSHAL BULLETIN

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Fire Safety for the Holidays

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The holidays are always a time of increased risk of a fire in the home. Some of the contributing factors to this increased risk include: increased cooking in the kitchen, Christmas trees that get dry, the increased use of candles, electrical outlets that become overloaded, frayed electrical cords, unsafe decorations that might catch fire, and the increased commotion in the house that might leave children unattended.

Fortunately, there are some things that you can do to prevent fires during the holiday season. The Fire Marshal Division has assembled some safety tips listed below that should help.

Follow these fire safety tips for the holidays:

- Choose a fresh tree. Look for one without shedding needles. Make a fresh cut on the trunk of the tree before placing the tree into the stand. Do not place the tree near sources of heat or near exits. REMEMBER: Water the tree each day to be sure it is kept fresh.
- Never leave cooking unattended. Cooking in the kitchen is one of the leading causes of home fires. You must remember to keep an eye on cooking. Keep the pot handles turned in on the stove so that children cannot reach them. Wear tight-fitting sleeves to avoid your clothes catching fire. Keep the stove area clean to avoid grease fires. But most of all, don't leave your cooking unattended.
- Watch children! See that matches and lighters are kept out of reach. Teach them to stay away from burning candles, fireplaces, and fireworks.
- Choose toys wisely. Pass up those that could be highly flammable. Make sure electric toys have been tested for fire safety by an approved laboratory such as Underwriter's Laboratory or Factory Mutual.
- Buy consumer-inspected Christmas tree lights (UL listed or Factory Mutual approved).
- Turn off tree lights before bed and never leave them on when not at home.
- Keep presents away from the hot tree lights.
- Do not overload electrical circuits and check for frayed wires.
- Discard the tree when the holidays are over, especially once it dries out.
- Don't burn gift wrappings in the fireplace, as this can cause chimney fires.
- Always put candles in candlesticks before you light them. Do not use them in decorations or displays. Keep them away from curtains or other combustible materials. Never put them in windows or near an exit. Never leave candles in the reach of children.
- Make sure you have working smoke detectors on every level of the home.
- If you have to use space heaters, keep them at least three feet from any combustible surface or material. Don't let children near space heaters. Never use them when you are asleep.
- Have your chimney and your furnace professionally inspected and cleaned.
- Practice home escape plans. Designate two exits from every room and be sure all family members know where to meet outside.

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Throughout the year, and during holiday seasons in particular, questions arise concerning the use of decorations in various regulated occupancies. For specific information regarding the use of decorations in facilities such as

schools, adult foster care homes, hospitals, nursing homes, homes for the aged, and other state regulated facilities, contact the Office of Fire Safety at (517) 322-1123.

If you have any questions regarding this bulletin, please contact the Fire Marshal Division at (517) 322-1924.

Please be advised that recipients of any Fire Marshal Bulletin may treat the contents as a news release. Feel free to insert your department, association, or individual name where appropriate when contact is made with local news media or other sources of dissemination.

Preventing and Surviving Home Fires

Holiday Safety

- Choose a fresh Christmas tree and water it frequently.
- Keep burning candles away from decorations and out of the reach of children.
- When decorating with lights, don't use frayed or damaged cords and remember to unplug all lights before leaving home or going to sleep.

Safe Cooking

- Never leave cooking unattended and keep towels, curtains, and other items that could catch fire away from the stove.
- Wear clothes with tight-fitting sleeves and turn pot handles inward on the stove where you can't bump them and children can't grab them.
- Keep cooking areas clean and keep a fire extinguisher in the kitchen.

Plan Your Escape

- Sit down with your family and design an escape plan. Be sure that everyone knows at least two un-obstructed exits (doors and windows) from every room.
- Identify a place outside to meet in case of a fire.
- Crawl low under smoke, keeping your head one to two feet above the floor. Feel closed doors with the back of your hand. If hot, use another exit.
- Practice the escape plan with your family so that everyone knows it!

Portable Heaters

- Give space heaters some space! Keep blankets, clothing, curtains, furniture and other combustible items away from portable heaters.
- Plug heaters directly into wall sockets and unplug them when leaving home or going to sleep.

Safe Smoking Habits

- Provide smokers with large, deep ashtrays and soak the butts before discarding.
- Never smoke in bed.
- Watch for smoldering cigarettes around cushions and upholstered furniture.

Smoke Detectors

- Install smoke detectors on every level of the home, and outside each sleeping area.
- Test the batteries monthly and replace them at least once a year.

Use Electricity Safely

- Do not overload electrical outlets or extension cords, and use extension cords sparingly.
- Use safety plugs in electrical outlets, especially with small children in the house.

Other Tips

- Store all matches and lighters up high, where children cannot see or reach them.
- Run cool water over a burn for 10 to 15 minutes. See a doctor if the skin blisters or chars.
- Have your home heating equipment inspected by a professional, including the chimney.

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- If your clothes catch fire, do not run! Stop, Drop and Roll!