



Holiday Fire Safety

Society of Fire Protection Engineers
Pacific Northwest Chapter

Have a Safe and Happy Holidays!

Holiday Decorating and Lighting

The holidays mean food, parties, and lots of family and friends. Unfortunately, it's also the time of year when there are a lot of home fires. This notice provides tips and precautions to help you have a safe Holiday Season:

- Use caution with holiday decorations and whenever possible, choose those made with flame-resistant, flame-retardant or non-combustible materials.
- Keep candles away from decorations and other combustible materials, and do not use candles to decorate Christmas trees.
- Purchase only lights and electrical decorations bearing the name of an independent testing lab, and follow the manufacturer's instructions for installation and maintenance.
- Carefully inspect new and previously used light strings and replace damaged items before plugging lights in. Do not overload extension cords.
- Always unplug lights before replacing light bulbs or fuses.
- Don't mount lights in any way that can damage the cord's wire insulation (i.e., using clips, not nails).
- Keep children and pets away from light strings and electrical decorations.



Christmas Trees

- Tree stands should hold the tree securely and be filled with water
- Water should cover at least two inches of the trunk
- Check trees daily for dryness and add water daily
- Remove natural cut trees from the home as soon as the tree is dry (when needles fall, discolor, or are no longer pliable)



Holiday Entertaining

- Unattended cooking is the leading cause of home fires in the U.S. When cooking for holiday visitors, remember to keep an eye on the range.
- Keep matches and lighters up high, out of sight and reach of children (preferably in a locked cabinet). When smokers visit your home, ask them to keep their smoking materials with them so young children do not touch them.
- Provide plenty of large, deep ashtrays and check them frequently. Cigarette butts can smolder in the trash and cause a fire, so completely douse cigarette butts with water before discarding.
- Test your smoke alarms, and let guests know what your fire escape plan is.



Fireplaces

Fireplaces can offer a beautiful source of heat when they are cared for properly.

- Always use a screen when using the fireplace to prevent sparks from entering your home.
- Burn only seasoned wood. Never burn wrapping paper, packing materials or other rubbish.
- Wait until the ashes are cool to remove them from the fireplace. Always dispose of them in a non-combustible container.

Facts & Figures

- In 2002, there were 241 Christmas tree fires in U.S. homes, resulting in 23 deaths, 12 injuries and \$11.4 million in direct property damage.
- During 1999-2002, an average 310 home fires started when Christmas trees ignited. These fires caused an estimated annual average of 14 civilian deaths, 40 civilian injuries and \$16 million in direct property damage/
- During 2001, an estimated 18,000 home fires started by candles were reported to public fire departments. These fires resulted in an estimated 190 civilian deaths, 1,450 civilian injuries and an estimated direct property loss of \$265 million.
- Fourteen percent of the candle fires occurred in December. This is almost twice the 8% monthly average.
- During 1999-2001, candles caused an estimated annual average of 16,300 home structure fires. These fires resulted in 140 civilian injuries and \$289 million in direct property damage.
- In 11% of the December candle fires, the fires began when a decoration caught fire. This was true in only 3% of the fires during the rest of the year.

Additional fire safety information can be found on the National Fire Protection Association's website (www.nfpa.org) or by contacting the Fire Department.