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Senior Safety News

Happy Holidays

We are in the 'season of lights'. It is an important time for being aware of fire and avoiding hazards that cause fires.

Candles, christmas trees, decorations and christmas tree lights bring safety hazards that are unique to this time of year. Buzz says be careful.

We want you to enjoy family and friends in your home not in the street. Avoiding fires and electrical problems is a good way to enjoy the holidays. Stay safe by being aware of those hazards that can cause fires.



Being aware keeps you safe and safety is a key to healthy living.

For safety tips go to Senior Safety Online by clicking on:

www.seniorsafetyonline.com

Stay healthy & Safe During the Holiday Season

Also, don't forget your flu shots

Candle Fire Safety

Use Candles with Care

Candle Statistics

Candles cause an estimated 15,600 fires in residential structures, 150 deaths, 1,270 injuries, and \$539 million in estimated direct property damage each year.

- ! Over half (55%) of home candle fires start because the candle is too close to some combustible material.
- ! More candle fires (38%) begin in the bedroom than in any other room.
- ! Falling asleep is a factor in 12% of home candle fires and 26% of the associated deaths.
- ! Half of all civilian candle fire deaths occur between Midnight and 6am.
- ! December is the peak month for candle fires; Christmas is the peak day.
- ! Young children and older adults have the highest death risk from candle fires.
- ! The risk of a fatal candle fire appears higher when candles are used for light.



Source: National Fire Protection Association

Candle Fire Safety Tips

- Avoid using lighted candles.
- If you do use candles, ensure they are in sturdy metal, glass, or ceramic holders and placed where they cannot be easily knocked down.
- Keep candles out of the reach of children and pets.
- Set a good example by using matches, lighters, and fire carefully.
- Never put candles on a Christmas tree.
- Never leave the house with candles burning.
- Extinguish candles after use.
- Establish a fire-safe home, especially a safe sleeping environment.
- And NEVER leave burning candles unattended!

Source..... US Fire Administration

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The Buzz - Published by Senior Safety Online

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Christmas Fire Safety Advice

Christmas is a special time for celebration and should not end in tragedy because of the extra hazards that are present at this time of year.

The following advice should be used in conjunction with other sections of the site, such as the candle fire safety page, due to the fact that candles are also used more and more at this time of year.

Fairy Lights

Fairy lights, Christmas tree lights, multiple sets of lights and other kinds of decorative lights get used less often than your everyday lights, and they need more care.

- Check the fuses are the right type (see the box for the maximum size of fuse you should use).
- If bulbs blow, replace them.
- Don't leave fairy lights on when you go out or when you go to sleep.
- Don't let the bulbs touch anything that can burn easily, like paper.
- Don't overload sockets.

Decorations

Decorations made of light tissue paper or cardboard burn easily.

- Don't attach them to lights or heaters.
- Don't put them immediately above or around the fireplace.
- Keep them away from candles.

Christmas Trees

Special fire safety precautions need to be taken when keeping a live tree in the house. A burning tree can rapidly fill a room with fire and deadly gases. This can be seen by viewing this video.



Selecting a Tree for Christmas

Needles on fresh trees should be green and hard to pull back from the branches, and the needle should not break if the tree has been freshly cut. The trunk should be sticky to the touch. Old trees can be identified by bouncing the tree trunk on the ground. If many needles fall off, the tree has been cut too long, has probably dried out, and is a fire hazard.



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Caring for Your Tree

Do not place your tree close to a heat source, including a fireplace or heat vent. The heat will dry out the tree, causing it to be more easily ignited by heat, flame or sparks. Be careful not to drop or flick cigarette ashes near a tree. Do not put your live tree up too early or leave it up for longer than two weeks. Keep the tree stand filled with water at all times.

Disposing of Your Tree.

Never put tree branches or needles in a fireplace or wood burning stove. When the tree becomes dry, discard it promptly. The best way to dispose of your tree is by taking it to a recycling centre or having it taken away by a community pickup service.

Bright Ideas for Lights

Indoors or outside, always use lights that have been tested for safety by a recognized testing laboratory that indicates conformance with safety standards.

Check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections, and throw out damaged sets.

Use no more than three standard-size sets of lights per single extension cord.

Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights, and a person touching a branch could be electrocuted.

Before using lights outdoors, check labels to be sure they have been certified for outdoor use.

Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, house walls, or other firm supports to protect the lights from wind damage. Use insulated staples to hold strings in place, not nails or tacks. Or run strings of lights through hooks (available at hardware stores).

Plug all outdoor electric decorations into circuits with ground fault circuit interrupters to avoid potential shocks.

Turn off all lights when you go to bed or leave the house. The lights could short out and start a fire.



Friendlier Fireplaces

Use care with “fire salts,” which produce colored flames when thrown on wood fires. They contain heavy metals that can cause intense gastrointestinal irritation and vomiting if eaten. Keep them away from children.



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Do not burn wrapping papers in the fireplace. A flash fire may result, as wrappings ignite suddenly and burn intensely.

Before lighting any fire, remove all greens, boughs, papers, and other decorations from fireplace area. Check to see that the flue is open.

Smoke Alarms

USFA recommends that every residence and place where people sleep be equipped with either both ionization and photoelectric smoke alarms or dual sensor smoke alarms. The USFA has either fully or partially funded a number of research efforts, including a recent study by the National Institute of Standards and Technology's (NIST) Center for Fire Research. Other contributors to this knowledge include the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), the National Fire Protection Association, Underwriters Laboratories, the Home Fire Safety Council, the Residential Fire Safety Institute, the Home Fire Sprinkler Coalition, and distinguished academics with expertise in smoke alarm and sensor technology. The body of research reflects the following:

- There are two types of smoke alarms in general use for residential smoke alarms: photoelectric and ionization. These types of smoke alarms sense the presence of smoke differently.
- The type of smoke produced by a fire depends strongly on the type of fire. Flaming fires produce a different type of smoke than smoldering fires.
- Both types of smoke alarms will detect the smoke from either a smoldering fire or a flaming fire. It has been factually established and well known for many years that:
 - Ionization type smoke alarms tend to respond faster to the smoke produced by flaming fires than photoelectric type smoke alarms, and
 - Photoelectric type smoke alarms tend to respond faster to the smoke produced by smoldering fires than ionization type smoke alarms.
- In some full-scale fire tests, the difference in the time to alarm between ionization and photoelectric type smoke alarms has been found to be trivial. In other full-scale fire tests, the difference in response time has been found to be considerable.

Based upon the above, the USFA provides the following guidance to the public and to state and local legislative bodies that may be grappling with the issue of the proper type of smoke alarm to select for use in a residence:

- It cannot be stated categorically that one type of smoke alarm is better than any other type of smoke alarm in every fire situation that could possibly arise in a residence.
- Because both ionization and photoelectric smoke alarms are better at detecting distinctly different yet potentially fatal fires, and because no one can predict what type of fire might start in a home, the USFA recommends that every residence and place where people sleep be equipped with either (a) both ionization and photoelectric smoke alarms, or (b) dual sensor smoke alarms (which contain both ionization and photoelectric smoke sensors).
- The location of a smoke alarm within a home may be more important than the type of smoke alarm present, depending on the location of a fire. The USFA recommends that users follow the manufacturer's guidance on the recommended location of smoke alarms in a home.