

## Holiday Safety Tips

The Franklin Park Fire Department reminds everyone that the holiday season is one of the most dangerous times of the year and residential fires during the holiday season are more frequent, more costly, and more deadly than at any other time of the year. The U.S. Fire Administration reports more than double the number of open-flame fires on Christmas Day than on an average day, and about twice as many on New Year's Day.

To keep your household and family safe during the holidays, remember to put safety first!

**Cooking:** Cooking is the top cause of holiday fires, and the most common culprit is food that's left unattended. It's easy to get distracted; take a pot holder with you when you leave the kitchen as a reminder that you have something on the stove. Make sure to keep a kitchen fire extinguisher, and check that smoke detectors are working. If you're planning to deep-fry your holiday turkey, do it outside, on a flat, level surface at least 10 feet from the house.

**Candles:** The incidence of candle fires is four times higher during December than during other months and four of the five most dangerous days of the year for residential candle fires are Christmas/Christmas Eve and New Year's/New Year's Eve. (The fifth is Halloween.) To reduce the danger, maintain about a foot of space between the candle and anything that can burn. Set candles on sturdy bases or cover with hurricane globes. Never leave flames unattended. Before bed, walk through each room to make sure candles are blown out. For atmosphere without worry, consider flameless LED candles.

**Christmas trees:** It takes less than 30 seconds for a dry tree to engulf a room in flames! To minimize risk, buy a fresh tree with intact needles, get a fresh cut on the trunk, and water it every day. A well-watered tree is almost impossible to ignite. Keep the tree away from heat sources, such as a fireplace or radiator, and out of traffic patterns.

No matter how well the tree is watered, it will start to dry out after about four weeks, says, so Artificial trees don't pose much of a fire hazard; just make sure yours is flame-retardant.

**Decorative lights:** Inspect light strings and throw out any with frayed or cracked wires or broken sockets. Extension cords should be in good condition and UL-rated for indoor or outdoor use. Check outdoor receptacles to make sure the ground fault interrupters don't trip. If they trip repeatedly, that's a sign that they need to be replaced. When hanging lights outside, avoid using nails or staples, which can damage the wiring and increase the risk of a fire. Instead, use UL-rated clips or hangers. And take lights down within 90 days!

**Kids playing with matches:** The number of blazes—and, tragically, the number of deaths—caused by children playing with fire goes up significantly during the holidays. From January through March, 13% of fire deaths are the result of children playing with fire. In December, that percentage doubles. So keep matches and lighters out of kids' reach.

**Fireplaces:** Soot can harden on chimney walls as flammable creosote, so before the fireplace season begins, have your chimney inspected to see if it needs cleaning. Screen the fireplace to prevent embers from popping out onto the floor or carpet, and never use flammable liquids to start a fire in the fireplace. Only burn seasoned wood—no wrapping paper. When cleaning out the fireplace, put embers in a metal container and set them outside to cool for 24 hours before disposal.

Practice these tips, and let's keep Franklin Park safe and happy during the holidays!