

# Entering the Holiday Season Safely

*Spring Lake Park-Blaine-Mounds View Fire Department*

The holidays are quickly approaching. Use these quick safety reminders from the Fire Department and the Home Safety Council to keep you and your family safe.

**Candle Safety-** Candles can provide a warm and festive atmosphere, but they can also be a fire hazard if left unattended or placed near anything flammable.

- Always keep burning candles up high, out of the reach of children. If you have children in your home, store candles, and matches and lighters out of their sight and reach.
- Always use stable, non-flammable candle holders.
- Keep candles at least 3 feet away from anything that can burn, including other decorations and wrapping paper.
- Never use candles near evergreens.
- Children should not be permitted to keep or use candles or incense in their rooms. Candles should only be used when a sober adult is present and awake.
- Always attend your candles. Extinguish all candles before going to sleep or leaving a room.

**Electrical Safety-** Holiday lights and electrical decorations create a warm and festive atmosphere both inside the home. They can also create a fire hazards or electrical shock risks, if they are not handled properly.

- Inspect holiday lights and extension cords before decorating. Replace any that are fraying or otherwise damaged. Pay special attention to lights, cords or decorations that may have been damaged from winter weather conditions.
- Check for red or green UL marks on all light strings and extension cords. The green holographic UL Mark means the light strings should be used only indoors. The red holographic UL Mark indicates the light strings can be used both inside and out and can withstand conditions related to outdoor use.
- As a general rule, Underwriters Laboratories recommends using no more than three standard-size sets of lights together.
- Do not overload extension cords or electrical receptacles.
- Unplug all holiday lights when you go to sleep or leave home.
- Automatic lighting timers can be used to ensure that lights are not left on. They are available for both indoor and outdoor applications.
- Keep cords out of high traffic areas and away from heat sources.
- **Never** keep an extension cord plugged in when it is not in use. They are only for a temporary use of power.
- When replacing a light bulb, make sure that the replacement bulb is of equal or lesser wattage than that recommended by the manufacturer.

**Christmas Trees-** Trimming the tree is a traditional holiday pastime; however, Christmas trees pose a serious danger to households if not properly cared for.

- When purchasing live, cut trees or greens, carefully inspect the needles. If they're brown or break easily, the greenery isn't fresh and poses a greater fire risk. Test for freshness by bending the needles. You are looking for them to spring back. Keep live trees supplied with water at all times; dehydrated Christmas trees can catch fire more easily.
- Make sure the tree is at least three feet away from any flame or heat source and try to position it near an outlet so that cords are not running long distances. Do not place tree where it blocks exits.

- Safely dispose of the tree when it begins dropping needles. Dried out trees are flammable and should not be left inside the home or garage, or placed against the garage.

**Keeping Guests Safe in Your Home-** Do you have guests coming to stay with you this season?

- Make sure all the lights over the halls, stairwells, porches and grounds are all working properly and illuminate the areas well.
- If tubs and showers don't already have non-slip strips or mats in them, install them now. Attach a sturdy grab-bar on the edge of the tub/shower area. Place nightlights in bathrooms and in dark hallways.
- Install a digital/battery-backed carbon monoxide detector in a high traffic area within 10 feet of the main bedroom (on each level), but away from the fuel-burning appliances or fresh air areas. Replace every 5 years. Have your fuel-burning appliances checked annually (furnaces, dryers, stoves, water heaters, etc).
- Post the new Poison Control number near the phones: 1-800-222-1222
- To guard against curious children, make sure all matches and lighters, medications, household cleaners, toiletries and other dangerous products are in original containers with child-proof closures and/or locked in a cabinet. Remember to keep purses, backpacks and luggage out of children's reach too.
- Make sure your home has working smoke alarms in each bedroom, in the hallways and on each level. Replace them every 10 years. Have and practice a safe escape plan for your family including agreeing on *one* meeting place.
- Turn your water temperature down to 120 degrees or lower.

*Make it a safe time of celebration!*