

Ringling in the Holidays Safely

Spring Lake Park-Blaine-Mounds View Fire Department and the National Fire Protection Association

The winter holidays are a time for celebration, and that means more cooking, home decorating, entertaining, and an increased risk of fire.

Facts & figures

- In 2005, there were 210 Christmas tree fires in U.S. homes, resulting in 42 injuries and \$12.1 million in direct property damage. No deaths were reported.
- During 2002-2005, an average 210 home fires started when Christmas trees ignited. These fires caused an estimated annual average of 24 civilian deaths, 27 civilian injuries and \$13.3 million in direct property damage.
- During 2005, an estimated 15,600 home structure fires started by candles were reported to local fire departments. These fires resulted in an estimated 150 civilian deaths, 1,270 civilian injuries and an estimated direct property loss of \$539 million. Homes include dwellings, duplexes, manufactured housing and apartments.
- December is the peak time of year for home candle fires. In December, 13% of home candle fires began with decorations compared to 4% the rest of the year.
- Three in 10 reported home fires start in the kitchen -- more than any other place in the home.
- Nearly half (44%) of all home heating fires occurred in December, January and February in 2002-2005.

Holiday decorating

- Use caution with holiday decorations and whenever possible, choose those made with flame-retardant or non-combustible materials.
- Keep candles away from decorations and other combustible materials, and do not use candles to decorate Christmas trees. Consider flameless battery operated candles.
- Carefully inspect new and previously used light strings and replace damaged items before plugging lights in. Do not overload extension cords.
- Check your strands of lights to determine the number of strands that may be connected. Connect no more than three strands of push-in bulbs and a maximum of 50 bulbs for screw-in bulbs.
- 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.
- Turn off all light strings and decorations before leaving home or going to bed.

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 your cooking.
- If you smoke, smoke *OUTSIDE!*
- Whenever you smoke, provide plenty of large, deep sturdy 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.
- After a party, always check on, between and under upholstery and cushions, and inside trash cans for cigarette butts that may be smoldering.
- 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.
- Test your smoke alarms, and let guests know what your safe escape plan is.

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.

- ▶ If you smoke, smoke outside.
- ▶ Wherever you smoke, provide plenty of large, deep sturdy 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.
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- ▶ Test your smoke alarms, and let guests know what your fire escape plan is.