

Fire Safety during the Winter Holidays

The Facts

- The winter holiday season is a time of high fire risk.
- During this holiday season the incidence of fires and fire losses involving candles, home heating equipment, clothes dryers, and electrical sources increase significantly when compared with their incidence during the rest of the year.

Safety Tips

Christmas Trees

- Ensure your artificial tree is "Fire Resistant".
- Ensure your live tree is fresh and moist at all times. Cut the base of the stem at an angle and keep the tree well watered. Dropping needles indicate a dry, highly flammable tree.
- Set up live and artificial trees away from fireplaces, heaters, and other heat sources and ensure they are not blocking an exit.

Lighting

- Indoors or outdoors, use only lights that have been tested and labelled by a recognized testing agency such as the ULC.
- Inspect holiday lights yearly for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections and throw out damaged sets.
- If using extension cords, make sure they are rated for the intended use and in good condition.
- 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.
- Turn off all holiday lights when you go to bed or leave the house.
- Outdoor electric lights and decorations should be plugged into circuits protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs).

Decorations

- Choose non-flammable decorations whenever possible.
- Keep decorations, curtains, clothing and spray from aerosol cans away from open flames or heat sources, such as lights, candles, heaters and fireplaces.
- Never use candles to decorate your Christmas tree.
- Mount candles on metal or glass candleholders, or place them in non-combustible containers.

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Holiday entertaining

- Unattended cooking is the leading cause of home fires. Do not leave your cooking unattended.
- Provide smokers with large, deep ashtrays and check them frequently. Douse butts completely in water before discarding.
- After a party, check under upholstery and cushions for smouldering cigarettes or butts.
- Keep matches and lighters up high and out sight and reach of children.
- Test your smoke alarms and explain your fire escape plan to your guests.
- Do not smoke in bed, when tired or under the influence of alcohol or medication. Smoking is the most common cause of fire deaths.

General

- Have your chimney and furnace cleaned and professionally inspected prior to each winter season.
- Keep heating appliances at least one metre (three feet) away from combustibles.
- Electrical and heating systems can fail and become fire hazards. Ensure they are regularly checked by a professional, especially prior to the holiday season when fireplaces, heaters, appliances and other electrical equipment are in maximum use.
- Ensure you have working smoke alarms on every level of your home and a well rehearsed fire escape plan in case a fire does break out in your home.
- Have a multi purpose fire extinguisher in your home with a minimum rating of 3A, 10BC.
- Protect your home this holiday season by covering your decorations with fire retardant spray.