***Winter and Holiday Season Safety***

Winter holidays are a time for families and friends to get together. But that also means a greater risk for fire. Following a few simple tips will ensure a happy and fire-safe holiday season.

**Holiday Decorating**

Be careful with holiday decorations. Choose decorations that are flame resistant or flame retardant.

Keep lit candles away from decorations and other things that can burn.

Before heading out or to bed, **b**low out lit candles. Turn off all light strings and decorations before leaving home or going to bed.

Some lights are only for indoor or outdoor use, but not both.

Replace any string of lights with worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections. Read manufacturer’s instructions for number of light strands to connect.

Use clips, not nails, to hang lights so the cords do not get damaged.

Keep decorations away from windows and doors.

**Holiday Entertaining**

Test your smoke alarms and tell guests about your home fire escape plan.

Keep children and pets away from lit candles.

Keep matches and lighters up high in a locked cabinet.

Stay in the kitchen when cooking on the stovetop.

Ask smokers to smoke outside. Remind smokers to keep their smoking materials with them so young children do not touch them.

Provide large, deep ashtrays for smokers. Wet cigarette butts with water before discarding.

**Christmas Trees and Decorations**

As you deck the halls this holiday season, be fire smart. A small fire that spreads to a Christmas tree can grow large very quickly. After Christmas Get rid of the tree after Christmas or when it is dry. Dried-out trees are a fire danger and should not be left in the home or garage, or placed outside against the home. Check with your local community to find a recycling program. Bring outdoor electrical lights inside after the holidays to prevent hazards and make them last longer.

PICKING THE TREE - Choose a tree with fresh, green needles that do not fall off when touched.

PLACING THE TREE - Before placing the tree in the stand, cut 2” from the base of the trunk. • Make sure the tree is at least three feet away from any heat source, like fireplaces, radiators, candles, heat vents or lights. • Make sure the tree is not blocking an exit. • Add water to the tree stand. Be sure to add water daily.

CHRISTAMAS TREE FACTS - Almost one third of home Christmas tree fires are caused by electrical problems. Although Christmas tree fires are not common, when they do occur, they are more likely to be serious. A heat source too close to the tree causes more than one in every five of the fires.

**Top Ten Fireplace and Heating Tips Checklist**

* 1. Our furnace has been inspected and serviced by a qualified professional during the last 12 months. (A furnace should be serviced at least once a year.)
* 2. Our chimneys and vents have been cleaned and inspected by a qualified professional. I have checked for creosote built-up. (Not cleaning your chimney is the leading cause of chimney fires from built up creosote. This service needs to be done at least once a year.)
* 3. Our wood for our fireplace or wood stove is dry, seasoned wood.
* 4. Our fireplace screen is metal or heat-tempered glass, in good condition and secure in its position in front of the fireplace.
* 5. We have a covered metal container ready to use to dispose cooled ashes. (The ash container should be kept at least 10 feet from the home and any nearby buildings.)
* 6. Our children know to stay at least 3 feet away from the fireplace, wood/pellet stove, oil stove or other space heaters.
* 7. Our portable space heaters have an automatic shut-off.
* 8. Our portable space heaters will be plugged directly into an outlet (not an extension cord) and placed at least three feet from anything that can burn; like bedding, paper, walls, and even people. (Place notes throughout your home to remind you to turn off portable heaters when you leave a room or go to bed.)
* 9. We have tested our smoke alarms and made sure they are working. (You need smoke alarms on every level of the home, inside each sleeping room and outside each separate sleeping area. For the best protection, the smoke alarms should be interconnected so when one sounds, they all sound.)
* 10. We have tested our carbon monoxide alarms and made sure they are working. (Carbon monoxide alarms should be located outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home.)

**Winter Storms and Extreme Cold Weather**

Winter storms can happen almost anywhere. Extreme cold weather in our region is a given. They can cause us problems. Know what to do before, during and after a storm. This will help keep you and your family safe from a winter fire.

• Test all smoke alarms. Do this at least once a month. This way you will know they are working. Install carbon monoxide alarms in your home. Test the alarms.

• Plan two ways out of the home in case of an emergency. Clear driveway and front walk of ice and snow. This will provide easy access to your home.

• Make sure your house number can be seen from the street. If you need help, firefighters will be able to find you.

• Be ready in case the power goes out. Have flashlights on hand. Also have battery-powered lighting and fresh batteries. Never use candles.

• Stay aware of winter weather. Listen to the television or radio for updates. Watch for bulletins online.

• Check on neighbors. Check on others who may need help.

• Generators should be used outdoors. Keep them away from windows and doors. Do not run a generator inside your garage, even if the door is open.

• Stay away from downed wires. Report any downed wires to authorities.

• Be ready if the heat stops working. Use extra layers of clothes and blankets to stay warm. If you use an emergency heat source, keep anything that can burn at least 3 feet away.

• Turn portable heaters off when you leave the room. Turn them off when you go to bed.

***IMPORTANT REMINDER!*** *There are more home fires in winter than in any other season. Half of all home heating fires happen in December, January and February. As you stay cozy and warm this winter season, be fire smart! Nearly half of all space heater fires involve electric space heaters.*

**Cooking Safety**

Cooking brings family and friends together, provides an outlet for creativity and can be relaxing. But did you know that cooking fires are the number one cause of home fires and home injuries? By following a few safety tips, you can prevent these fires. The leading cause of fires in the kitchen is unattended cooking. Most cooking fires in the home involve the kitchen stove.

Safety - “Cook with Caution”

* Be on alert! If you are sleepy or have consumed alcohol don’t use the stove or stovetop.
* Stay in the kitchen while you are frying, boiling, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.
* If you are simmering, baking, or roasting food, check it regularly, remain in the home while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you that you are cooking.
* Keep anything that can catch fire — oven mitts, wooden utensils, food packaging, towels or curtains — away from your stovetop.
* Cooking and Kids Have a “kid-free zone” of at least 3 feet around the stove and areas where hot food or drink is prepared or carried

What To Do in Case of Fire!

If you have a small (grease) cooking fire and decide to fight the fire...

• On the stovetop, smother the flames by sliding a lid over the pan and turning off the burner. Leave the pan covered until it is completely cooled.

• For an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the door closed.

\*\*\****If you have any doubt about fighting a small fire…***\*\*\*

1. Just get out! Bring others with you. When you leave, close the door behind you to help contain the fire.
2. Call 9-1-1 from outside the home in a safe location.

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