

# **Illinois State Fire Marshal Stresses Safety When Decorating for the Holidays to Reduce the Risk of Fire**

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SPRINGFIELD - The holidays are here and that means many will be decorating their homes. Hanging up decorations is fun, but keep in mind, holiday decorations can increase your risk for a home fire. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) more than two of every five home decoration fires occur due to decorations

being placed too close to a heat source. More than one-third of home decoration fires are started by candles. The NFPA also reports that US fire departments responded to an average of 780 home structure fires per year that began with decorations between 2013-2017.

More than half of home decoration fires in December are started by candles. Candle fires peak in December followed closely by January. The top three days for home candle fires are Christmas Day, New Year's Day and New Year's Eve. Before you head to bed or out for the evening, extinguish all lit candles.

“The OSFM will once again be hosting the Keep the Wreath Red Campaign at our offices in Springfield and Chicago. This campaign raises awareness about the importance of fire safety during the holiday season (December 1st through January 2nd),” says Illinois State Fire Marshal Matt Perez. “Unfortunately, last year 15 lives were lost in fire-related incidents during the holiday season in Illinois. Following and exercising fire safety measures can reduce your risk of fire or injuries related to fires not only during the holiday season but every day.”

Keep the wreath red campaign began in 1954 in Naperville to raise awareness about holiday fire safety. Wreaths will be placed and lit with red bulbs outside of the OSFM offices in Springfield and at the Thompson Center in Chicago. White light bulbs will replace the red bulbs when a fire-related death is reported in the state. “These white lights are not just bulbs; they represent a person! That person could be your Mom, Dad, Brother, Sister, Aunt, Uncle, Friend or neighbor,” says Fire Marshal Perez. The goal of the campaign is to strive for zero fire related deaths during the holiday season.

Here are some tips to keep in mind to stay fire safe when decking the halls this holiday season.

- Be careful with holiday decorations. Make sure decorations are either flame retardant or flame resistant.
- Keep lit candles at least 12 inches away from decorations or anything that can catch fire.
- Keep children and pets away from lit candles.
- Extinguish all lit candles before going to bed or leaving the house.
- Check to make sure your lights are rated for indoor or outdoor use or both.
- Replace any light strands that have worn or broken cords. Make sure to read the recommendation for number of light strings you can string together.
- Turn off all light strings and decorations before leaving home or going to bed.
- If you have a real Christmas tree, make sure to check water levels daily! It is not unusual for a tree to drink two gallons of water the first day it is in the stand.
- Keep real Christmas trees away from a heat source. It can dry out the tree quickly.

After a busy cooking day on Thanksgiving, before firing the oven back up preparing the next holiday meal, make sure to clean it! In case of an oven fire, turn off the oven and keep the door closed until it is cool. Clean cook tops as left-over grease can catch fire. Thanksgiving is the peak day for home cooking fires, but Christmas and Christmas Eve follow closely behind.

If you are planning to host family and friends during the holidays, make sure they are aware of your fire escape plan. Show them where all the exits are in your home and make sure they are aware of the meeting spot's location. Make sure they you are following all the social distancing protocols issued from the Illinois Department of Public Health and the CDC.