American Red Cross Offers Holiday Safety Tips

December 22 2020 1:16 PM

St. Louis, MO - Though decorations like trees, lights and candles make us feel like the holiday season is really here, they also increase the risk of home fires. Nearly one-third of us have left the room or fallen asleep while burning candles, according to a 2020 national American Red Cross survey, which makes flameless candles a safer option this holiday season. The American Red Cross would like to offer the following holiday safety tips:

7 Holiday Decorating Safety Steps:

1. Check all holiday light cords to make sure they aren't frayed or broken. Don't string too many strands of lights together — no more than three per extension cord. Turn off all holiday lights when going to bed or leaving the house.

1. Ensure outside decorations are for outdoor use and fasten lights securely to your home or trees. If using hooks or nails outside, make sure they are insulated to avoid electrocution or fire hazard.

1. Look for the fire-resistant label on an artificial tree. Keep it away from fireplaces, radiators, and other sources of heat. Never use electric lights on metallic trees.

1. Keep live trees watered. Bend the needles up and down to make sure no needles fall off.

1. Don't light the fireplace if hanging stockings on the mantel.

1. Check the labels of older decorations. Some older tinsel is lead-based and wearing gloves will help avoid irritation. Avoid breathing in artificial snow.

1. Have good, stable placement when using a ladder and wear shoes that allow for good traction when putting up decorations and taking them down.

The Red Cross also advises people to test their smoke alarms and practice their home fire escape plan until everyone in their household can get out in two minutes or less.

Visit redcross.org/homefires for more information and free resources, or download the free Red Cross Emergency app (search "American Red Cross" in app stores or go to redcross.org/apps).