

Home For The Holidays: Red Cross Offers Fire-safety Tips

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ST. LOUIS -Did you know that December is the peak month for home candle fires? If you're decorating with candles this holiday season, consider using the battery-operated kind.

"It's critical to take action now to be as safe as possible as the threat of home fires increases with the holidays and cooler weather," said Chris Harmon, Regional Disaster Officer for the Missouri-Arkansas Region. "From July-November, Red Cross volunteers in our region responded to approximately 1,200 home fires, providing emergency

assistance to more than 4,000 people. The good news is that you can take a few simple steps this time of year to help protect your loved ones.”

The risk of candle fires is so common that nearly one-third of us have left the room or fallen asleep while burning them, according to a 2020 national [American Red Cross survey](#). If you must use candles, never leave them unattended, keep them away from anything that could burn, and place them out of reach from children and pets.

OTHER HOLIDAY DECORATING SAFETY TIPS

1. **Check all holiday light cords** to ensure 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.
2. **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 an electrocution or fire hazard.
3. **Look for the fire-resistant label when buying an artificial tree.** Keep it away from fireplaces, radiators and other sources of heat. Never use electric lights on metallic trees.
4. **If getting a live tree, make sure it's fresh and keep it watered.** Bend the needles up and down to make sure no needles fall off.
5. **Don't light the fireplace** if hanging stockings on the mantel.
6. **Check the labels of older decorations.** Some older tinsel is lead-based. If using angel hair, wear gloves to avoid irritation. Avoid breathing in artificial snow.
7. **Have good, stable placement when using a ladder** and wear shoes that allow for good traction.

STAY SAFE FROM HOME FIRES Help keep your family safe by **testing your smoke alarms monthly and practicing your home fire escape plan** until everyone can get out **in less than two minutes** — the amount of time you may have to leave a burning home before it's too late.

Visit redcross.org/fire for more information or download the [free Red Cross Emergency app](#) (search “American Red Cross” in app stores).

About the American Red Cross:

The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and provides comfort to victims of disasters; supplies about 40% of the nation's blood; teaches skills that save lives; distributes international humanitarian aid; and supports veterans, military members and their

families. The Red Cross is a nonprofit organization that depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to deliver its mission. For more information, please visit redcross.org or cruzrojaamericana.org, or visit us on Twitter at [@RedCross](https://twitter.com/RedCross).