

This Holiday Season; Deck The Halls With Fire Safety In Mind

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SPRINGFIELD - The OSFM stresses the importance of fire safety while decorating for the holiday season. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) more than one-third of home decoration fires are started by candles. More than two of every five home decoration fires occur due to decorations being placed too close to a heat source. The NFPA also reports U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated average of 790 home structure fires per year that began with decorations, excluding Christmas trees. Between 2017-2021, U.S. fire departments responded to an average of 150 home fires per year that started with Christmas trees. Electrical distribution or lighting

equipment was involved in more than two in five home Christmas tree fires with nearly one in five Christmas tree fires being started by lamps or bulbs. Roughly two of every five home Christmas tree fires started in the living room.

Candle fires peak in December followed closely by January. More than half of home decoration fires in December are started by candles. 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.

"Decorating for the holiday season is an exciting time, but you need to keep fire safety in mind when you deck the halls," said Illinois State Fire Marshal James A. Rivera.

"Make sure to follow all the manufactures recommendations when it comes to the number of light strings you string together and replace any light strings with broken or frayed wires. Consider using battery powered candles, or make sure to extinguish all candles before heading to bed or leaving a room. Following a few of these safety tips will help you enjoy a bright and festive holiday season free from any accidental fires."

The OSFM will once again be hosting the Keep the Wreath Red Campaign at our offices in Springfield and Chicago, along with at the Quinn Fire Academy in Chicago and the Illinois Fire Service Institute in Champaign. This campaign raises awareness about the importance of fire safety during the holiday season (December 1st through January 2nd). Unfortunately, last year 7 lives were lost in fire related incidents during the holiday season in Illinois.

Keep the Wreath Red campaign began in 1954 in Naperville to raise awareness about holiday fire safety. 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! This could be your mother, father, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, friend, or neighbor. The goal of the campaign each year is to raise awareness and help prevent fire deaths from occurring.

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 a meeting spot location in case of fire.