



NEWS from STATE FIRE

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STATE FIRE ADMINISTRATOR OFFERS HOLIDAY SAFETY ADVICE

State Fire Administrator Floyd A. Madison today reminded New Yorkers of the increased fire risk during the holiday season because of the improper installation and practices of using decorations around the home.

“Most fires occur because of human error,” Madison said. “Every year during the holidays we unfortunately see an increase in candle-related fires that are simply preventable. Candles add a distinctive aura to this festive season. But treat them with respect. Place candles where they will not be knocked over and extinguish them when you leave the room. And above all, teach your children they should not play with candles.”

In his annual holiday safety message, the State Fire Administrator urged New Yorkers to follow these tips:

Trees

- When purchasing an artificial tree, look for the label "Fire Resistant." Although this label does not mean the tree won't catch fire, it does indicate the tree will resist burning and should extinguish quickly.
- When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness. A fresh tree is green; needles are hard to pull from branches and when bent between your fingers, needles do not break. The trunk butt of a fresh tree is sticky with resin, and when tapped on the ground, the tree should not lose many needles.
- When setting up a tree at home, place it away from fireplaces and radiators. Because heated rooms dry live trees out rapidly, be sure to keep the tree stand filled with water. Place the tree out of the way of traffic and do not block doorways.

Lights

- Indoors or outside, use only lights that have been tested for safety by a recognized testing laboratory, which indicates conformance with safety standards.
- Check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections, and throw out damaged sets.
- Use no more than three standard-size sets of lights per single extension cord.

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- Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights and a person touching a branch could be electrocuted.
- Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, house walls, or other firm supports to protect the lights from wind damage. Use only insulated staples, not nails or tacks, to hold strings in place. Or, run strings of lights through hooks (available at hardware stores).
- Turn off all lights when you go to bed or leave the house. The lights could short out and start a fire.
- For added electric-shock protection, plug outdoor electric lights and decorations into circuits protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). Portable outdoor GFCIs can be purchased where electrical supplies are sold. GFCIs can be installed permanently to household circuits by a qualified electrician.

Decorations

- Use only non-combustible or flame-resistant materials to trim a tree. Choose tinsel or artificial icicles of plastic or nonleaded metals. Leaded materials are hazardous if ingested by children.
- Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens. Always use non-flammable holders, and place candles where they will not be knocked down. Never leave lighted candles unattended. Extinguish all candles when you go to bed or leave the house.
- In homes with small children, take special care to avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable. Keep trimmings with small removable parts out of the reach of children to avoid the child from swallowing or inhaling small pieces and avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food that may tempt a child to eat them.

Fireplaces

- Do not burn wrapping papers in the fireplace. A flash fire may result because wrappings ignite suddenly and burn intensely.
- Have your chimney inspected each year and cleaned if necessary.
- Use a sturdy fireplace screen.
- Allow ashes to cool before disposing. Dispose of ashes in a metal container.

The holidays are also an excellent time to check the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms and fire extinguisher as well as reviewing your home fire safety plan, including practicing your home escape plan with overnight holiday guests.

“By knowing where holiday fire hazards most commonly occur and taking some simple steps to eliminate them, New Yorkers can greatly reduce their risk of a fire this holiday season,” Madison said.

For more information on keeping your home safe from fire, visit the New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control website at <http://www.dos.state.ny.us/fire/firepub.htm#Flyers>.

To view holiday safety video, visit: <http://www.youtube.com/nysdosvideos#p/f/7/h1uZTIkxdTA#####>