



Fire Prevention Canada

Working with the private and public sectors to achieve
fire safety through education

HOLIDAY SAFETY

The holidays are a time for celebration with family and friends. Unfortunately, they are also a time when the number of preventable residential fires increases across Canada. That's why fire safety should be a key consideration in any holiday plans. It is also why it is vital to ensure smoke alarms are installed on every level of the home and have working batteries in them. This should be the time of year for celebration, so let us be as vigilant about being fire-safe as we are about not drinking and driving. The following safety tips will help everyone be safer this holiday season.

In the Kitchen

- Never leave cooking unattended. This is the leading cause of kitchen fires.
- Let your family know about the importance of paying attention to cooking.
- If distracted by another activity or a phone call, turn off the heat before leaving the kitchen.
- Turn pot or pan handles inward to prevent burns caused by overturned pots.
- Wear short or close-fitting sleeves to avoid clothes catching fire.
- Keep flammable materials, such as curtains, newspapers or plastic bags, away from heat sources such as burners and the oven.
- Have a pot lid nearby to smother a pan fire.
- If frying foods, use a temperature-controlled electric skillet or deep-fat fryer.

Holiday Tree

- If purchasing a live tree, check for freshness by pulling on the needles. If they are brown or come off easily, the tree is probably dry and can be a fire hazard.
- When setting up the tree, try to position it near an electrical outlet to keep cords short.
- Cut two to five centimetres diagonally off the base of the tree, and place it securely in a large holder; ensure that the water in the holder stays at least one centimetre above the cut to prevent the tree from drying out.
- Before leaving home or going to sleep, always unplug tree lights.
- For an artificial tree, check the label to ensure it is fire-retardant.
- If using an aluminum or metal tree, do not decorate with strings of lights or electrical products (these trees are conductors of electricity).
- Make sure any tree is kept away from exits, heat vents, fireplaces, radiators, televisions and other heat sources.

Disposing of Holiday Trees

- Immediately after holiday celebrations, dispose of live trees and take down artificial ones.
- Never put tree branches or needles in a fireplace or wood burning stove. They can spark and ignite nearby items.
- The best way to dispose of a live tree is to take it to a recycling centre or have it hauled away by a community pick up service.

Decorating Tips

- Use only non-combustible, flame retardant or flame resistant materials to decorate your home or tree.
- Never use candles to decorate trees.
- Keep candles away from decorations, trees and other combustible materials.
- Keep candles in a sturdy holder away from children, pets and combustible materials. Blow them out before leaving the room or going to sleep.
- To eliminate the risk of an open candle flame, use battery-powered candles whenever possible, especially when using candles in a decorative setting.
- Purchase only lights and electrical decorations bearing the name of an independent testing lab (ULC or CSA, for example), and follow the manufacturer's instructions for installation and maintenance.
- Indoor lights should only be used indoors; outdoor lights should only be used outdoors.
- Run outdoor light cords above the ground to keep them away from snow and water.
- Carefully inspect new and previously used light strings, and replace damaged items before plugging lights in.
- Be mindful of not damaging a cord's wire insulation when mounting lights. It is safer to use plastic clips instead of nails.
- Keep pets and young children away from electrical decorations and light strings.
- Locate decorations in an area that will not block or interfere with an exit, or exit route.
- Space heaters need space - ensure at least one metre of clearance.
- Turn off all light strings and decorations before leaving home or going to bed.
- Never place furniture, rugs or other objects over electrical cords. Any damage the cord may sustain can go unnoticed.
- Never overload extension cords.
- Take down all decorations and bring outdoor electrical lights inside immediately after the holidays.

Entertaining

- Holiday wrapping can be highly combustible and should be kept away from heat sources such as candles, lamps, fireplaces and wood burning stoves.
- Never throw wrapping paper in a fire place. Rapid burning can generate sparks or ignite creosote in the chimney.
- Alcohol and fire are a dangerous mix. Keep a close eye on anyone cooking or smoking while under the influence of alcohol.
- Keep matches and lights up high, out of sight and reach of children.
- When smokers visit your house, ask them to keep smoking materials with them, and away from small children.
- After a party, always check on, between and under upholstery and cushions and inside trash cans for smouldering cigar or cigarette butts.

Portable Electric Heaters

- When purchasing a space heater, be sure to choose one that automatically shuts off if it falls over.
- Place space heaters on a flat, level surface and provide at least one metre of space from things that can burn – blankets, furniture, curtains and clothing.
- Avoid using an electrical heating device on the same circuit with another high wattage appliance, such as a microwave or toaster oven.
- Regularly inspect the wall outlet, heater plug and cord for excessive heat.
- Check electrical heating equipment regularly; replace loose, frayed or damaged cords.

NOTE: never use a range or oven to heat your home.