

# Not all heroes wear capes, some hang on walls and ceilings.

Winter is upon us and with it comes time to gather with our friends and family for celebrations. As we come together, one of my primary responsibilities is to look after the health and safety of my family and our guests. With that in mind, here are some things that you can do to help ensure your home is a safe place for your family and friends.

First in line for the safety in our homes are the smoke detectors and carbon monoxide (CO) monitors. Let's face it, most of us don't think about these until we burn the toast, or they start chirping in the middle of the night. The reality is that these devices are typically the first to alert us to a potential emergency. Most smoke detectors these days are combination devices that also detect harmful CO gases and have both regular AC power and a battery backup. The chirping that you hear can mean one of two things. First, we all know that periodic single chirp that only happens in the middle of the night which means that the battery is low and needs to be replaced. But what happens when you replace the battery, and it still chirps? Smoke detectors have an end-of-life signal and that is most likely what is happening. These units typically have a life of 10-12 years and when the device chirps 3 times it is a sign that it needs to be replaced completely. Checking these devices and replacing the batteries on a regular schedule can save headaches and lost sleep. We recommend that you do this twice per year. In our house we do it when we change our clocks.

So, it wasn't the toast or broiler that set off the smoke detector! Yikes, where did I put that fire extinguisher? You have one, right? I certainly hope you have several. While Star Fire is a great department, they are most likely not your next-door neighbor and will take at least a few minutes to get to you in an emergency. Having **working** fire extinguishers located in various locations in your house is very important. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) recommends that you have at least one device on each level of your home and particularly in locations such as the kitchen, garage and laundry which is where fires are most likely to occur. Annually, check the pressure gauge on the extinguisher to see that it is properly charged (in the green zone) to be sure that it'll work when you need it. If in doubt, replace it. I guarantee that a trip to the Merc or Bi-Mart is cheaper than a rebuild.

One of the first things my wife does when she gets home every night is light a wonderfully scented candle in the living room. It fills the house with a warm comfortable smell and creates a little ambiance, but I can't tell you the number of times we'll be lying in bed, and she'll ask, "Did you blow out the candle?" DOH! These candles can pose a serious risk if they are left to burn down to nothing and the glass gets extremely hot and combusts items such as magazines on the coffee table or nightstand. The NFPA reports that December is the peak month for candle fires in America and that candles are responsible for over 5% of all home structure fires. Please make sure that when you enjoy candles they are on noncombustible surfaces and away from anything else that may catch fire. Never under any circumstances have real candles on your Christmas tree.

November is the prime time for frying turkeys so hopefully you didn't contribute to the latest NFPA statistics last month. I know that it should go without saying but do not ever fry your turkey in the house or garage. There are several handy websites (<https://www.thekitchn.com/how-to-deep-fry-turkey-recipe-23457878> for instance) that will give you tips on frying turkeys so that you have a safe and tasty meal. If you are looking to boil a bird for Christmas, remember to properly prepare the turkey, keep the burner on a flat stable surface at least 10' from the house or wood pile and that you have one of those handy fire extinguishers close by.

We hope that you and your family have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. As always, if you have any questions regarding information in this, or any other article, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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