



Department of Commerce

Division of State Fire Marshal

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Keep Your Holidays Safe



Trees

When purchasing an artificial tree, look for a “Fire Resistant” label. When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness - make sure the needles are soft and don’t fall off. Cut about one inch off the bottom of the trunk before putting the tree in the stand. Add water and check daily. Dry trees can burn in SECONDS! Don’t block your exit with your tree, and be sure to remove live trees from your home as soon as possible. Most Christmas tree fires occur on or after New Year’s Day.



Lights

When preparing to wrap your tree in lights, use UL approved light sets, check each set for damaged sockets or wires and discard bad sets. Always follow manufacturer recommendations concerning the maximum number of light sets that can be connected together. Replace burnt out bulbs with ones of the same wattage as indicated on the tag attached to the light set. Turn off all lights when you go to bed or leave the house. Never use electric lights on a metallic tree, because you could be electrocuted.

For decorating the outside of your home, only use light sets and extension cords marked “for outdoor use,” and fasten those lights securely with insulated staples or hooks. Use circuits protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs).



Decorations

Use only non-combustible or flame-resistant materials to trim a tree. Never use lighted candles on or near a tree or other evergreens. Keep children and pets in mind when placing decorations on a tree.



Gifts

“Think big” when choosing toys for small children. Small parts could be a choking hazard, so make sure gifts are appropriate for the child’s age. “Think easy” when choosing a gift for someone who may have arthritis or some other physical challenge. Make sure there is a “fire-resistant” label on infant’s sleepwear. Consider giving a gift that shows you care about someone - smoke alarms, carbon monoxide alarms and fire extinguishers make great gifts!

Fireplaces & Heaters

Before starting a fire in a fireplace, make sure it has been cleaned and free of creosote. Remove all decorations (including those stockings hung by the fireplace) and be sure the flu is open. Do not burn wrapping papers in the fireplace. They can burn extremely fast; throwing off sparks and can ignite creosote that has previously accumulated in the chimney. Always use a screen in front of the fireplace, and consider using a fire-resistant carpet or a mat (one made for fireplaces) on the floor in front of the fireplace.

When plugging in electric heaters, make sure the outlet is designed to handle the load. Be safe; do not plug anything else into the socket with the heater. When using kerosene heaters, make sure you use the correct fuel only. The wrong fuel may cause a fire or explosion. Keep all combustible materials, including wrapping paper, away from heaters.



Be Prepared

Check your smoke alarms monthly, and replace the batteries twice a year. Install smoke alarms on each level of your home and in sleeping areas. Develop an escape plan with two ways out from each room. Practice your fire escape plan with your family.



Make a Plan

Make a plan for your own fire safety and protection:

- Find all possible exits from your room or residence. Tell your roommates about your plan.
- Make a fire escape plan that includes two routes from each room.
- Designate an outside meeting space so all of your roommates can be accounted for.
- Practice your fire escape route plan – most fires happen at night when it is dark and difficult to see.
- Conduct a “Home Safety Inspection” for fire and safety hazards.
- Call your local fire department for more information.

Safety Inspection Checklist

A residential fire happens every 30 minutes in Ohio. How safe is the place you are living in? Every “YES” response indicates a positive fire safety situation. However, every “NO” response points to a potential fire hazard that needs to be corrected.

Careless Smoking Hazards

- Smoking materials and matches are completely out before disposing of them.
- Plenty of large, noncombustible ash trays are available in each room.
- A “No Smoking in Bed” rule is observed.
- Ash trays are used outside (to avoid mulch fires).

Electrical Hazards

- Adequate circuit breakers (or fuses) are available for the equipment used.
- All of the electrical equipment and appliances used have the UL label from Underwriters Laboratories, Inc.
- Adequate electrical outlets are available in every room to avoid the need for multiple attachment plugs and long extension cords.
- Multiple outlet extension cords have a built-in circuit breaker.
- Extension cords are for temporary use only, three-pronged type (grounded), and of the right size to handle the power needed.
- Extension cords are in the open and not run under rugs or through partitions or openings.

Smoke Alarms – Fire Protection Systems

- Smoke alarms are installed on every level and inside sleeping areas.
- Smoke alarms are tested monthly, and batteries are changed twice a year.
- Smoke alarms are less than 10 years old.
- A carbon monoxide detector is installed.
- In a public building, fire alarm pull-boxes are located near exits and unobstructed.
- In sprinklered buildings, sprinkler heads are unobstructed.

Heating and Cooking Hazards

- The heating system has been inspected and serviced in the past year.
- The fireplace is equipped with a sturdy metal fire screen.
- The fireplace or wood-burning stove’s chimney has been cleaned within the past year.
- All vent connectors and flue pipes that pass through attics, ceilings and walls are properly installed.
- All combustible materials are at least 3 feet away from any space heater.
- The kitchen stove, including the oven, is kept clean of grease.
- Food, plastic containers, etc., are not stored in the oven.
- The coffee pot, heating element, and other appliances are unplugged when unattended.
- Grills are only used outdoors and away from the building.

Housekeeping Hazards

- Floors and exit ways are clear of clutter.
- Room doors are kept closed (Helps keep fire and smoke from spreading).
- Candles and other open flame items are extinguished when you leave the area.
- Paint and other combustible materials are kept in tightly closed containers away from a heat source.
- Outside areas around the building are kept clear of leaves, debris and combustible materials.

