

HOLIDAY FIRE PREVENTION TIPS FOR THE HOME

Christmas, Hanukkah and the other holidays are a common time for house fires, so try these tips to prevent fires in the home from Thanksgiving to New Year's.

Each fall, firefighters across Canada see a dramatic increase in the number of house fires.

Follow these tips to prevent house fires around Christmas.

Hints for Preventing Christmas Tree Fires

- When purchasing a Christmas tree, tap the tree trunk against the ground. If a large quantity of pine needles fall off, the tree has dried out, posing a fire hazard.
- Do not purchase a live Christmas tree if the pine needles fall off.

- When bringing a live Christmas tree home, make a fresh cut on the tree trunk. This will enable the Christmas tree to "drink water" more effectively.
- Keep the live Christmas tree in a sturdy Christmas tree stand, with plenty of water at all times. Check the water level daily.
- Monitor the condition of the Christmas tree, especially during the latter part of December. Once the pine needles start to fall off easily, the tree has dried out, posing a serious fire hazard.
- Do not place Christmas trees or any other combustible items near a fireplace or space heater.
- If purchasing a fake Christmas tree, only purchase a tree that's fire retardant.

Fire Prevention Tips for Christmas Lights and Other Holiday Decorations

- When purchasing Christmas lights and electric holiday decorations, only purchase items with a UL (Underwriters Laboratories) sticker, seal or logo. A UL sticker or logo on holiday decorations and Christmas lights indicates that the item has passed rigorous quality control testing and safety testing with Underwriters Laboratories.
- Before putting Christmas lights up on the Christmas tree or on the house, check the cord for evidence of fraying, chew marks, melting or any other damage. Wire damage is a prime cause of electrical fires.
 - When using strings of Christmas lights, check each and every Christmas light to ensure that the bulb is sitting properly in the socket.
 - Limit the use of electrical cords and avoid using electrical socket adapters that create room for additional plugs. This poses a serious fire hazard.

- Unplug the Christmas tree lights, electrical holiday ornaments and outdoor Christmas lights when not in use. Before plugging them back in, inspect the cord and plug for signs of damage.
- If pets are present in the home, place decoration and Christmas light power cords inside PVC piping to help prevent damage from a dog, cat or other pet chewing, clawing or otherwise damaging the cord.
- Do not leave Christmas lights or other decorations plugged in when there's no one home.
- Only use "outdoor" or "indoor / outdoor" Christmas lights on the exterior of a home.

Other Holiday Hazards in the Home

- Check that all smoke detectors (and carbon monoxide detectors) are operational, with fresh batteries. This will help alert residents quickly in the event that a fire breaks out inside the

home.

- Keep a full size fire extinguisher on each floor of the home, and in the garage, basement and utility areas. If a holiday fire does break out inside the home, a fire extinguisher will be a first line of defense, preventing the rapid spread of a fire, especially in the case of a Christmas tree fire.
- Do not leave cooking food unattended when using the stove. Holiday cooking fires are common, especially when family and friends are visiting - the cook can become distracted and forget about the food on the stove.
- Limit the use of candles.
- Candles are a primary cause of house fires during the holiday season.
- Never leave a candle unattended and avoid the use of candles when children and pets are present.