



## **HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS FROM THE SAN FRANCISCO FIRE DEPARTMENT**

### **Holiday Tree Safety**

- Artificial Christmas trees
  - must be fire retardant
  - All decorations and lights must be fire retardant
- Natural tree
  - can't be located near heating vents or other fixed or portable heating devices that could cause it to dry out or be ignited
  - Natural tree must be cut straight at least ½ inch above the end prior to placing it in the stand to allow for water absorption
  - Must be placed in a suitable stand with water
  - Water must be maintained above the cut and checked at least once a day
  - Your tree stand should have a capacity of at least one gallon, which is the amount of water that the average 6-foot Christmas tree can consume in a day's time. As a general rule of thumb, live Christmas trees require one quart of water for every inch of trunk diameter.
- Buying a natural tree
  - Tree must be removed immediately if evidence of dryness
  - Before taking a Christmas tree home, make sure that its needles are fresh, green, and firmly attached to the branches. Bend the needles between your fingers – if they break, the tree is too dry. Heck that the tree trunk's cut surface is sticky to the touch.
  - pick the tree up vertically and tap the trunk against the ground; if needles fall off, move on to another tree.

- As a general rule, Christmas trees with thicker needles take longer to dry out, so a robust variety like the Noble Fir is a good choice.
- All trees
  - must not obstruct corridors, exit ways, or other means of egress
  - Only Christmas tree specific lights are allowed on trees
- One of every 32 reported home Christmas tree fires results in a death compared to an average of one death per 143 total reported home fires.
- A heat source too close to the tree causes one in every four Christmas tree fires

## **Holiday Light Safety**

### **General**

- 1 in 4 Christmas tree fires cause by electrical problems

### **Decorations**

- Decorate with materials that don't catch fire easily. Look for the decorations that are clearly marked "nonflammable" or "flame-retardant"

### **Candles**

- Lit candles are dangerous and should never be left unattended
- The top three days for home candle fires are Christmas, New Year's Day, and Christmas Eve.
- Candles start two out of five home decoration structure fires
- SFFD recommends using battery operated candles

### **Lights**

- Turn off lights on trees and other decorations before going to bed
- decorate outdoors, make sure that you use lights and decorations that are rated for outdoor use
  - if you're in doubt as to whether light strings are rated for indoor or outdoor use, just check the color-coded UL mark on the product's package. A green holographic UL mark says, "indoors only, please," while a red one indicates that the product is safe for both indoor *and* outdoor use.
- Check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections. Discard damaged sets or replace them before using;
- Always unplug lights before changing bulbs, replacing fuses, or making any other repairs.

- if you need to replace a bulb in a string of Christmas lights, make sure that the wattage rating of the replacement bulb you're using matches that of the light strand. Using a bulb with too high a wattage can cause the light string to overheat, creating a fire risk
- When hanging Christmas lights outdoors, reduce your risk of electric shock by passing up metal ladders in favor of ladders made of non-conductive materials like wood or fiberglass-reinforced plastic.
- Only use lights and decorations in accordance with manufacturers' instructions
  - Before you begin decorating, verify how many strands of lights it is safe to connect end-to-end (as a general rule, it's 3).
- Every so often, check Christmas light wires to make sure that they're not warm to the touch.
- Modern lights have fused plugs, preventing sparks in case of a short circuit. Ditch old strands of lights that don't have fuses and get a set of newer, safer lights.
- Water and debris can get into outdoor sockets, so make sure outdoor lights are plugged into a [ground fault circuit interrupter outlet](#) to reduce the risk of shorts and shocks.
- Don't use tacks, nails or screws to hang lights, which can pierce the cable and become electrified. Use insulated hooks instead.

## **Extension Cords/Plugs**

- Use no more than three standard-size sets of lights per single extension cord
- The more lights you use, the more you'll need places to plug them all in. Make sure you use surge protectors and don't overload your electrical outlets
- Keep an eye on extension cords, as they can occasionally overheat. Just touch-test the cord. If it's hot, unplug it.

## **Heating Safety**

- Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from heating equipment, like the furnace, fireplace, wood stove, or portable space heater.
- Have a three-foot "kid-free zone" around open fires and space heaters
- Never use your oven to heat your home.
- Have a qualified professional install stationary space heating equipment, water heaters or central heating equipment according to the local codes and manufacturer's instructions.
- Have heating equipment and chimneys cleaned and inspected every year by a qualified professional.
- Remember to turn portable heaters off when leaving the room or going to bed
- Always use the right kind of fuel, specified by the manufacturer, for fuel burning space heaters.

- Make sure the fireplace has a sturdy screen to stop sparks from flying into the room. Ashes should be cool before putting them in a metal container. Keep the container a safe distance away from your home.
- Test smoke alarms at least once a month.
  - Change batteries annually
- From 2013-2015, an average of 45,900 home heating fires occurred in the United States each year. These fires caused an annual average of approximately 205 deaths, 725 injuries and \$506 million in property loss
  - Heating was the second leading cause of home fires after cooking.
- Home heating fires peaked in the early evening hours between 5 and 9 p.m. with the highest peak between 6 and 8 p.m. This four-hour period accounted for 29 percent of all home heating fires.
- Confined fires — fires confined to chimneys, flues or fuel burners — accounted for 75 percent of home heating fires.

## **Cooking Safety**

- Unattended cooking is the leading factor in home cooking fires
- 2/3 of home cooking fires started when food or other cooking materials caught fire
- clothing was the item first ignited in less than 1% of these fires, but these incidents accounted for 18% of the cooking fire deaths
- ranges accounted for the largest share 62% of home cooking fire incidents
- more than half 55% of reported non-fatal home cooking fire injuries occurred when the victims tried to fight the fire themselves
- frying poses the greatest risk of fire
- Keep children away from cooking areas by enforcing a "kid-free zone" of 3 feet around the stove.
- Follow manufacturers' instructions when using cooking equipment. Remember to plug microwave ovens and other cooking appliances directly into an outlet. Never use an extension cord for a cooking appliance, as it can overload the circuit and cause a fire. Cook only with equipment designed and intended for cooking, and heat your home only with equipment designed and intended for heating.
- Keep Things That Can Catch Fire and Heat Sources Apart
  - like oven mitts, wooden utensils, food wrappers, and towels well away (a minimum of three feet) from the cooking area.
  - Push up shirt sleeves and avoid wearing billowy clothing that may come in contact with open flames or other heat sources
- prevent spills due to overturned appliances containing hot food or liquids, use the back burner when possible, and/or turn pot handles away from the stove's edge.
- Use oven mitts or potholders when moving hot food from ovens, microwave ovens, or stovetops

- Use a timer to keep track of cooking times, most notably when simmering, baking, or roasting foods that require longer cook times. Check the stove or oven frequently.
  - Consider putting timers in different rooms so you can hear them over music and party chatter.
- Avoid cooking when drinking alcohol, using other substances, or if you're sleepy

Most importantly, Enjoy your Holiday Season. We encourage you to visit our website at: [www.sf-fire.org](http://www.sf-fire.org) for more safety tips. If you have an emergency, call 911. If you have a non-emergency question, please call our fire prevention team M-FR 8-5pm at: 415-558-3300. You can also email the Public Information Office at: [Firepio@sfgov.org](mailto:Firepio@sfgov.org)



**KEEP YOUR FRIENDS  
SAFE FROM HARM...**

**SEND EACH ONE A  
SMOKE ALARM!**



**BE SURE YOU...**

- **Install smoke alarms on every level of the home, outside sleeping areas, and inside bedrooms.**
- **Test all smoke alarms in your house once a month.**
- **Replace smoke alarm batteries at least annually.**
- **Replace smoke alarms that are more than 10 years old.**
- **Develop and practice a home fire escape plan.**



**FEMA**



SAN FRANCISCO FIRE DEPARTMENT  
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHRISTMAS FIRE SAFETY

The San Francisco Fire Department suggests the following recommendations to insure that your family has a safe holiday:

Unless your building is protected by an approved automatic sprinkler system, natural-cut trees are prohibited in public assemblies, schools, institutions, retail stores, and public areas of residential buildings. For more detailed descriptions of these group occupancies, please call the Bureau of Fire Prevention at (415) 558-3300. Natural-cut trees are allowed within dwelling units in apartment buildings and condos that do not have sprinkler systems.

Natural-cut trees in schools, public assemblies, and common areas of residential buildings shall be fire-retardant treated by a California State Fire Marshal registered applicator. Such trees shall be provided with appropriate tags.

When using natural cut trees, saw off at least 1/2 inch of the trunk above the original cut and mount the tree in a support device that holds water. The device shall be stable, hold the tree securely, and be of adequate size to avoid tipping over of the tree. The device shall be capable of containing a minimum two-day supply of water.

The water level, when full, shall cover the tree stem at least two (2) inches. The water level shall be maintained above the fresh cut and checked at least once daily.

Select the location for your tree carefully. Keep the tree away from fireplaces, heating vents, wall furnaces, and other heat producing appliances which may dry out the tree.

The tree shall be removed from the dwelling or building whenever the needles or leaves fall off readily when a tree branch is shaken or if the needles are brittle and break when bent between the thumb and index finger. The tree shall be checked daily for dryness.

Please do not use candles or other flaming devices on your tree or near other holiday decorations.

Examine the tree lights for the Underwriters Laboratories label and check the cord for signs of wear and tear. Discard if old or frayed.

Extension cords must be used with care. It is recommended that no more than 3 sets of lights be used per extension cord. Do not place the cords under rugs or in paths of travel.

When the holiday is over, and the tree is taken down, do not attempt to burn the tree in your fireplace, backyard, or front yard. Dry trees throw off tremendous amounts of heat and fire. Leave the tree in front of your house for your scavenger company on the day of your regular garbage pick-up.

(Updated 11/13/2012)



# Put a **FREEZE** on Winter Holiday Fires

It's fun to decorate for the winter holidays, but holiday decorations can increase your risk for a home fire. As you deck the halls this season, be fire smart.



More than **half** of the home decoration fires in December are started by candles



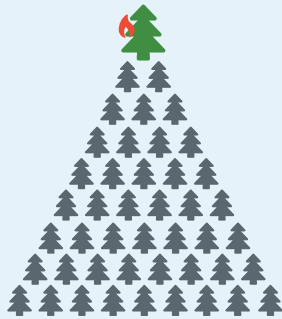
More than **1/3** of home decoration fires are started by candles.



The top 3 days for home candle fires are **Christmas Day, New Year's Day** and **New Year's Eve**.



Keep candles at least **12 inches** away from anything that burns.



Although Christmas tree fires are not common, when they do occur, they are dangerous.

On average, **1 of every 45** reported home Christmas tree fires resulted in death.



A heat source too close to the Christmas tree causes **1 in every 4** winter fires.



Read manufacturer's instructions for the number of light strands to connect.



Make sure your tree is **at least 3 feet away** from heat sources like fireplaces, radiators, space heaters, candles or heat vents. Also, make sure your tree does not block exits.



Get rid of your tree after Christmas or when it is dry.



# Cooking Safety

Cooking brings family and friends together, provides an outlet for creativity and can be relaxing. But did you know that cooking fires are the number one cause of home fires and home injuries? By following a few safety tips you can prevent these fires.

## “COOK WITH CAUTION”

- Be on alert! If you are sleepy or have consumed alcohol don't use the stove or stovetop.
- Stay in the kitchen while you are frying, boiling, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.
- If you are simmering, baking, or roasting food, check it regularly, remain in the home while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you that you are cooking.
- Keep anything that can catch fire — oven mitts, wooden utensils, food packaging, towels or curtains — away from your stovetop.

## If you have a small (grease) cooking fire and decide to fight the fire...

- On the stovetop, smother the flames by sliding a lid over the pan and turning off the burner. Leave the pan covered until it is completely cooled.
- For an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the door closed.

## If you have any doubt about fighting a small fire...

- Just get out! When you leave, close the door behind you to help contain the fire.
- Call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number from outside the home.



## Cooking and Kids

Have a “kid-free zone” of at least 3 feet (1 metre) around the stove and areas where hot food or drink is prepared or carried.

## FACTS

- ! The leading cause of fires in the kitchen is unattended cooking.
- ! Most cooking fires in the home involve the kitchen stove.



**NATIONAL FIRE  
PROTECTION ASSOCIATION**

The leading information and knowledge resource  
on fire, electrical and related hazards



# Christmas Tree Safety



As you deck the halls this holiday season, be fire smart. A small fire that spreads to a Christmas tree can grow large very quickly.



## PICKING THE TREE

- Choose a tree with fresh, green needles that do not fall off when touched.



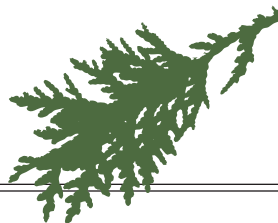
## PLACING THE TREE

- Before placing the tree in the stand, cut 2" from the base of the trunk.
- Make sure the tree is at least three feet away from any heat source, like fireplaces, radiators, candles, heat vents or lights.
- Make sure the tree is not blocking an exit.
- Add water to the tree stand. Be sure to add water daily.



## LIGHTING THE TREE

- Use lights that have the label of a recognized testing laboratory. Some lights are only for indoor or outdoor use.
- Replace any string of lights with worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections. Read manufacturer's instructions for number of light strands to connect.
- Never use lit candles to decorate the tree.
- Always turn off Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.



## After Christmas

Get rid of the tree after Christmas or when it is dry. Dried-out trees are a fire danger and should not be left in the home or garage, or placed outside against the home.

Check with your local community to find a recycling program.

Bring outdoor electrical lights inside after the holidays to prevent hazards and make them last longer.

## FACTS

- ! **One** of every three home Christmas tree fires is caused by electrical problems.
- ! Although Christmas tree fires are not common, when they do occur, they are more likely to be serious.
- ! A heat source too close to the tree causes roughly **one in every four** of the fires.



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The leading information and knowledge resource on fire, electrical and related hazards



# Hotel & Motel Safety

Vacations and business travel make hotels and motels our home away from home. It is just as important to be prepared and know what you would do in a hotel/motel emergency as it is in your own home.

## BE SAFE WHEN TRAVELING!

- Choose a hotel/motel that is protected by both smoke alarms and a fire sprinkler system.
- When you check in, ask the front desk what the fire alarm sounds like.
- When you enter your room, review the escape plan posted in your room.
- Take the time to find the exits and count the number of doors between your room and the exit. Make sure the exits are unlocked. If they are locked, report it to management right away.
- Keep your room key by your bed and take it with you if there is a fire.
- If the alarm sounds, leave right away, closing all doors behind you. Use the stairs — never use elevators during a fire.
- If you must escape through smoke, get low and go under the smoke to your exit.

## *If You Can't Escape...*

**SHUT** off fans and air conditioners.

**STUFF** wet towels in the crack around the doors.

**CALL** the fire department and let them know your location.

**WAIT** at the window and signal with a flashlight or light colored cloth.

## FACTS

- ❗ On average, one of every **13 hotels** or motels reported a structure fire each year.
- ❗ The majority of hotel fire deaths result from fires that started in the **bedroom**.
- ❗ **Cooking equipment** is the leading cause of hotel/motel fires.



Your Source for SAFETY Information

NFPA Public Education Division • 1 Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02169