



Safety Scribe

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SOME FIRE SAFETY TIPS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

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During this festive season statistics show there will be a 23% increase in residential fires, a 24% increase in the number of fire deaths, and a 43% increase in the number of fire related injuries. Most fire officials believe that this is due to a combination of increased cooking activities and carelessness associated with this hectic season.

Cooking related fires increase as people leave the cooking elements on and younger children are helping in the kitchen. The kitchen counter becomes cluttered with ignitable material or people just forget they had something on the stove. The results are predictable: a fire ensues and engulfs the kitchen. Smoke detectors and approved kitchen fire extinguishers will help to minimize the damages. Also, each household should have a fire safety plan identifying two ways out, a meeting point outside the house, and instructions on the operation of fire extinguishers.

It is important to maintain a clear and safe work area in the kitchen and avoid placing combustible material near the stove elements. Be sure to clean the cooking appliances, especially toaster ovens, to avoid an interior fire. Utilize timers where possible, to warn you when a pot may be boiling dry or the item is cooked but not burning!

Candles are also a major concern, but it is easy to eliminate or minimize the potential fire risk. If you cannot avoid the use of candles, make sure to follow these simple precautions. Keep the matches and lighters out of the hands of children. Buy only those candles with a wide base, as this will help stabilize the candle when lit. Provide a safe enclosure or stand that will help protect the open flame from contacting combustible material. Locate candles where there are no combustibles material above or near by: a burning candle on a fireplace mantle and located below the Christmas wreath is a fire incident waiting to happen!

A fireplace can also present some fire hazards at any time of the year, but the danger is increased in the holiday season. The tendency to place festive decorations on or around the fireplace increases the likeli-

hood of a fire. Remember not to leave the matches where children can reach them. Burn dry seasoned wood in the fireplace and have the chimney cleaned annually. Never use accelerants such as gasoline or lighter fluid to start a fire. Always keep the doors or screens closed to prevent the logs and sparks from reaching the flooring or nearby combustibles. Keep Christmas stockings and decorations away from the fireplace opening. Remember that the fireplace will need fresh air to burn properly. Newer units have combustion air supplied by a direct outside vent; however some homes may require a window to be slightly opened. A carbon monoxide detector will help to protect you family as well.

The number of reported Christmas tree fires has decreased over the past few years, due partly to the

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