

Daily Safety Tips for the “Keep the Wreath Green” campaign.

December 1: When buying a natural tree, test the freshness of the tree. A fresh tree is green, needles are hard to pull from branches and when bent between your fingers, needles do not break. Watch out for trees with a greenish tint to their trunk and branches; many growers spray trees with green paint to make them look more appealing.

December 2: Before bringing in your natural tree, minimize the fire risk and maximize the freshness by keeping the tree outdoors for a few days in a bucket of water.

December 3: If you’re purchasing an artificial tree, make sure it bears the “fire resistant” label. While this type of tree can catch fire, it will resist burning and should extinguish quickly.

December 4: Keeping a tree fresh and watered could make the difference between losing your house or your life. Because heated rooms dry out natural trees quickly, keep the tree stand filled with water. Check the water level daily, and add water as needed. A six foot tree will absorb one gallon of water every two days.

December 5: When displaying your tree, make sure the tree is away from fireplaces, portable heaters, and heater vents. Also, ensure the tree is not obstructing doorways and is not placed in high traffic areas.

December 6: Never use real candles on a natural or artificial tree or near other greenery. Always use non-flammable holders, and place candles where they will not be knocked over.

December 7: When hanging holiday lights, either on your tree or outside, do not connect more than three strands of lights per single extension cord. Make sure you do not overload electrical outlets, extension cords or circuits. Only one extension cord should be used per outlet. Do not run power cords underneath rugs or carpets.

December 8: Use only lights tested for safety by a recognized testing laboratory, such as Underwriters’ Laboratories (UL). All lights, new or old, should be inspected for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections. Lights should only be used for their intended purposes.

December 9: When using a ladder to hang lights or decorations, remember to follow all labels/markings on ladder. Remember the three L’s regarding ladder safety. Locks should be properly engaged. Ladder should only be used on a Level surface. The Last (top) step or rung should not be used unless it is designed for that purpose.

December 10: Turn off all lights prior to going to bed or leaving the house. The lights could short out and start a fire. Decorated light villages, nativity scenes, or electrical scenery should be treated as decorative lights.

December 11: Have your chimney and fireplace inspected by a professional to make sure it's clean and free of obstructions. Be sure the fireplace is covered with a metal screen or glass doors to prevent the spread of sparks and fire.

December 12: When purchasing a space heater, make sure it bears the UL safety label and is equipped with a cut-off safety feature that turns the heater off should the heater accidentally tip over or overheat.

December 13: Space heaters need space. Make sure they are at least three feet away from combustible materials such as draperies, furniture, bedding, clothing, and decorations. Warn children to keep away from them.

December 14: Install a working smoke alarm outside every bedroom and on every level of your house. Test the smoke alarms monthly.

December 15: Have a plan in case you have a fire: Step 1 - Design an evacuation plan for your home and family. Make sure everyone understands exactly what to do and where to go in case of an emergency.

December 16: Have a plan in case you have a fire: Step 2 - Know the ways out of every room and practice them to make sure you can do it.

December 17: Have a plan in case you have a fire: Step 3 - Crawl low under smoke and feel closed doors for heat. If the door is warm, find another way out.

December 18: Have a plan in case you have a fire: Step 4 - In the unfortunate event you become trapped, close doors and stuff the door cracks to keep smoke out. Try to call 911 and let them know exactly where you are and signal for help from a window.

December 19: Have a plan in case you have a fire: Step 5 - Pay special attention to young children, elderly people and the disabled. Be sure to include them in your plan.

December 20: Have a plan in case you have a fire: Step 6 - Get out as fast as you can and stay out. Never go back inside. Once you're safely outside have someone go to a neighbor's house and call 911.

December 21: Have a fire extinguisher available in your home and make sure it is fully charged. Know how to use your fire extinguisher. Remember the acronym **PASS**: **P**ull the pin. **A**im the nozzle at the base of the fire. **S**queeze the trigger lever. **S**weep the stream side-to-side at the base of the fire. If the fire is out of control, do not attempt to fight the fire. Exit your home and call 911.

December 22: Use candles with care. Keep candles out of reach of children and pets. Burn candles inside a one foot circle of safety, free of anything that can ignite. Use sturdy candleholders that will not tip over. Never leave a burning candle unattended.

December 23: According to the National Fire Protection Association, unattended cooking is the leading cause of home fires in the U.S. When cooking for holiday visitors, remember to keep an eye on the range. Handles on stovetop pots should be turned away from the front, so they won't be accidentally tipped or knocked over.

December 24: Before you cook that holiday dinner, be sure that the oven and stovetop are clean, free of grease, and are in good working order. Keep cooking areas clean and free of grease and other combustibles (potholders, towels, rags, drapes and food packaging), which can easily catch on fire.

**NOTE:** I used to put a note out on Christmas Eve (midnight)-"T'was the night before Christmas, when all through the house, Not a candle was lit, as they were all blown out. The children were nestled all snug in their beds, with smoke and carbon monoxide alarms installed over their heads!"

December 25: Remember to be safety conscious and have a Happy Holiday.

December 26: Do not burn wrapping paper in the fireplace because of the paper being highly flammable. Dangerous sparks and the possibility of flash fires are possible. Gather all the gift boxes and discard them with the garbage and recyclable materials.

December 27: Remove outdoor lights as soon as the season is over. Many light sets are not designed for prolonged exposure to the elements. Use care handling lights when taking them down and repacking them will reduce the chance of damaging a serviceable set of lights.

December 28: The end to the holiday season means letting go of that holiday spirit and all those decorations. The longer the decorations stay up, the greater the fire hazard. Never burn trees (branches or needles) in a fireplace. Firs and pines have a lot of sap, which can explode. Flames can flare up out of control and send sparks flying across the room. Creosote deposits can also ignite in the chimney, and cause a chimney fire. The best way to dispose of your tree is to take it to a recycling center.

December 29: With children out of school on Christmas break, please be aware and slow down while driving especially in the evening and around large piles of snow.

December 30: Have extra money from those gift cards? Purchase a carbon monoxide detector, additional smoke alarms or a rescue ladder for your home. Carbon monoxide can be produced by any natural gas powered appliance if it malfunctions. Carbon monoxide is the silent killer.

December 31: Please be safe and responsible. Don't drink and drive. Have a designated driver or call a friend.