

The New Hampshire State Fire Marshal's Office suggests the following safety tips to ensure a safe and happy holiday season:

General Heating Tips

Keep any heater at least three feet away from anything that might burn. This means curtains, walls, furniture, papers, etc. To avoid injury and other mishaps, keep children and pets away from heaters. ALWAYS REMEMBER, don't try to get a small device to do a big job. For best results, direct the heat from a portable heater where you want it. It won't heat an entire room. Focus the heat where you need it - but not so close that it can cause fires or burns.

Christmas Trees

When keeping a cut tree in the house, special fire safety precautions need to be taken. A burning tree can rapidly fill a room with fire and deadly gases. Selecting a tree is the first step to safety. Make sure needles are green and hard to pull back from the branches. The trunk should be re-cut so it easily absorbs water. To avoid premature drying, keep your tree away from heat sources, including sunlight, fireplaces and heating vents. Your tree should be kept in water throughout its recommended two-week life. Locate the tree away from exits and use only cool lamp listed and approved lights. The use of tree lights should be limited to only times when the room is occupied.

Cooking Safety

Pay particular attention while cooking, especially when using oils and grease. Cooking appliances should be kept clean of grease build-up, which can easily ignite. Applying a lid to a small grease fire is usually the most effective and safest method of controlling it. Trying to carry a pan that's on fire is extremely dangerous because it can ignite clothes or spill, causing severe burns. If the fire is inside your oven, turn off the heat and leave the door closed to cut off the fire's air supply. Young children should be kept away from cooking appliances to prevent any mishaps. It's always a good idea to use back burners when possible and keep pot handles turned to the inside so they won't be pulled or knocked over. Check stoves and other appliances before going to bed or leaving your home to make sure that the units are left in the "off" position. With the increased popularity of frying turkey, NFPA and the National Burn Foundation warn consumers and discourage the use of turkey fryers. Tests have shown that many of the fryers have a risk of tipping over, overheating, or spilling hot oil, leading to fires and burns. The suggested alternative is to have a commercial professional prepare the turkey.

Holiday Lights

Inspect holiday lights each year for frayed wires, bare spots, gaps in the insulation, broken or cracked sockets. To avoid overloading electrical outlets, do not link more than three light strands unless the directions indicate it is safe. However tempting, it is not recommended to leave your lights burning overnight or while you are away from home.

Candle Safety

If you choose to use lit candles, make sure they are in globes or stable holders. Place them where they cannot be easily knocked down or come in contact with combustibles. Never leave lit candles unattended. Lit candles should not be placed on or near your Christmas tree or near anything that can burn. Young children can be fascinated with a burning flame, so be sure candles, lighters or matches are not in reach of curious hands.

Now is a great time to test your smoke alarms and to review your home escape plan so that if in the event of a fire, everyone in your household knows how to get out quickly and safely. For even greater protection, consider installing a residential fire sprinkler system. Fire Sprinklers actually stop the spread of fire using small amounts of water that protects life and property. Remember that fire safety is your responsibility and your preventive actions may save your or your family's life. On behalf of the New Hampshire Office of the State Fire Marshal, we trust you and your family will have a fire safe holiday season.