



Holidays & Fire Safety

It doesn't take much to start a fire during the holidays. Remember:

Wrapping paper is combustible. Tissue paper, cardboard, cloth, wrapping paper, and wood are all commonly found in the home during the holidays, but if waste materials are allowed to build up, or are stacked in a pile together, all it takes is one ignition source to get a fire going.

Electrical problems happen. Overloaded circuits, outlets, or damaged wiring and plugs can all lead to dangerous electrical fires. Do not use a strand of decorations if any damage has occurred to the protective coating over the wires. All electrical repairs should be done by a professional.

There are potential fire sources in every home. Any source of heat, ignition, or spark can cause a fire when combined with flammable materials. Keep combustible items away from open flames, such as candles or fireplaces. Never leave open flames unattended, and make the extra effort to dispose of matches or cigarettes and cigars properly. When cooking, keep oven mitts, wooden utensils, and loose sleeves away from your stovetop.

Alcohol and fires don't mix. Alcohol is flammable and improper handling or disposal of flammable liquids can quickly lead to a fire. If a fire should occur, drinking can slow down decision making processes, making it difficult to remember fire

safety information or locate emergency exits.

Know Your Way Out. In a fire, the object is to get outside as quickly and as safely as possible. Smoke from a fire can make it difficult to see exits, and the usual way out could be blocked by flames. Know where other exits are.

If you're in a room with the door closed when a fire breaks out, and you see smoke coming through the cracks around or if the doorknob is hot, do NOT open the door. Find another way out of the building. If you don't see smoke AND the doorknob is not hot, open the door slowly. If there is no smoke or heat, proceed to the exit.

Preventing Holiday Stress

If the holidays have taken an emotional toll on you in the past, according to the Mayo Clinic, the following tips can help you prevent holiday stress and depression.

Be realistic. The holidays will not be perfect or just like last year. As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Choose a few to hold on to, and be open to creating new ones.

Set aside differences. Try to accept people the way they are, even if they don't live up to all of your expectations. Set aside grievances until an appropriate time for discussion. Be understanding if others get upset or distressed when something goes awry. Chances are they're feeling the effects of holiday stress and depression, too.



Stick to a budget. Before you go gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend, and stick to your budget.

Learn to say no. Saying yes when you should say no can lead to feelings of resentment. Friends and colleagues will understand if you can't participate in every project or activity. When it's not possible to say no, try to remove something else from your agenda to make up for the lost time.

Don't abandon healthy habits. Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to stress and guilt. Don't go overboard on sweets, cheese, or drinks. Continue to get plenty of sleep and physical activity.

Take a breather. Make some time for yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Take a walk at night and stargaze. Listen to soothing music. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing and restoring inner calm.

Seek professional help if you need it. Anyone experiencing persistent sorrow or anxiety, insomnia, irritability, unable to face routine tasks, and the feelings last for a while, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional.



TREE & LIGHTS SAFETY

When choosing a fresh tree, tap it on the ground; if it loses needles, it isn't fresh. Leave the tree outside until you're ready to decorate. Cut an inch off the trunk to help it absorb water. Make sure your tree stand can hold at least a gallon of water; a 6 foot tree will absorb 1 gallon every 2 days. Check the water level each day. You can lengthen the life of your tree by missing a commercial preservative with the water. Secure the tree with wire to keep it from tipping. Keep your tree away from floor heaters, fireplaces, or other heat sources. Use only UL-approved lights, with no more than three strands linked together. Turn off the tree lights when you sleep, or if you leave the room. Never use candles to light the tree, even on artificial trees.

Use only outdoor lights and extension cords outside. Examine light strands each year, and discard any that are worn. Connect no more than 3 strings together, and point bulb sockets downwards to avoid moisture buildup.

Toy Safety Recommendations

Buying holiday gifts for young children can be very fun, but December is Safe Toys & Gifts Month for good reason. Think "appropriate and safe" when selecting toys for children.



- 🔗 Match toys to the child's age, interests, and abilities.
- 🔗 Look for the letters "ASTM," which show that the product meets the national safety standards set by the American Society for Testing and Materials.
- 🔗 Look for safety labels like "Not recommended for children under 3 years of age," "non-toxic," and "washable / hygienic materials."

No Shock Checklist

Electricity is a powerful force—one not to be taken lightly. In fact, those who take risks with electricity often pay with their lives. Follow these electrical safety rules every day:

Make sure your hands are dry—even of sweat—before touching anything electrical. Make sure electrical equipment is properly grounded. Don't overload electrical outlets or circuits. Keep electrical cords away from heat and water. Use extension cords only if necessary and only if they're rated for the job.

- 🔗 Use waterproof cords outside and in wet areas.
- 🔗 Use approved extension cords only.
- 🔗 Check cords and plugs on electrical equipment to make sure they're in good condition.
- 🔗 Don't use equipment with damaged cords or plugs.
- 🔗 Match plugs to outlets, including 3-pronged plugs in 3-pronged outlets.
- 🔗 Avoid running cords along the floor where they could be damaged.
- 🔗 Don't staple or nail electrical cords; you could damage the insulation.
- 🔗 Shut down, tag out, and report malfunctioning electrical equipment.
- 🔗 Follow manufacturer's instructions for all electrical equipment.

