



Ohio Committee For Severe Weather Awareness

Winter Fire Safety Tips

Fire Prevention Week is October 6-12, 2019



Winter time is holiday time - and that means lots of cooking, lots of entertaining, and unfortunately, lots of opportunities for home fires to occur. The Division of State Fire Marshal urges Ohio families to pay particular attention to fire safety during the winter and holiday season.

As of October 12, 2018, there were 91 accidental residential fire fatalities in Ohio. In 2017, Ohio had a total of 109 accidental residential fire fatalities.

The winter season and holidays create a greater risk for fire. The following are a few safety tips from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) to ensure a happy and fire-safe holiday season:

- Overloaded outlets
- Misuse of extension cords
- Not turning off lights and decorations before going to bed or leaving the home
- Old or worn holiday lights
- Old or worn out appliances and electrical cords

Holiday Decorating

- Inspect holiday lights each year before using. Throw away light strands with frayed or pinched wires. Read manufacturer's instructions for number of light strands to connect.
- Be careful with holiday decorations. Choose decorations that are flame resistant or flame retardant.
- Some lights are only for indoor or outdoor use, but not both.
- Use clips, not nails to hang lights so the cords do not get damaged.
- Turn off all lights before you go to bed or leave the home.
- Keep decorations away from windows and doors.

Fire Safety Facts

- More than 1/3 of home decoration fires are started by candles.
- 42% of decoration fires happen because decorations are placed too close to a heating source.

Trees

- When purchasing an artificial tree, look for a "Fire Resistant" label.
- If you have a metallic tree, never use electric lights on it. You could be electrocuted.
- When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness. Make sure the needles are soft and are not falling off. Hard, brittle needles are signs of a dry tree, which can easily catch fire.
- Keep your live tree a safe distance from heat sources.
- Live trees need water, and lots of it. Cut about one inch off the bottom of the trunk before putting the tree in the stand. Add water and check the tree daily.
- Do not block your exit door with your tree.
- Remove live trees from your home as soon as possible. Most Christmas tree fires occur on or after New Year's Day.

Holiday Entertaining

- Test your smoke alarms and tell guests about your home fire escape plan.
- Keep children and pets away from lit candles. Consider using battery-operated flameless candles which can look and smell like real candles.
- Keep matches and lighters up high, out of children's reach.
- Stay in the kitchen when cooking on the stovetop.
- Ask smokers to smoke outside. Remind smokers to keep their smoking materials with them, away from young children.
- Do not block your exit door with your tree.

- Provide large, deep ashtrays for smokers. Wet cigarette butts with water before discarding.

Home Heating and Fire Prevention Safety Tips

Smoke Alarms, when properly installed and maintained, provide early warning when fire occurs. For the greatest protection, install a smoke alarm on every level of your home and inside each sleeping area.

Test smoke alarms at least once a month to ensure that they are working properly. Vacuum the dust from inside the alarm at least once a year. Batteries in battery-operated alarms should be changed twice a year or whenever an alarm "chirps" to signal low battery power. Never "borrow" a smoke alarm's battery for another item's use. A disabled smoke alarm cannot save your life. Smoke alarms should be replaced every 10 years, or according to the manufacturer's specifications.

Develop an escape plan with two ways out from each room. Practice your fire escape plan with the family - include fire drills in the middle of the night - to ensure that everyone knows what to do if there is a fire and the smoke alarms sound.

Fireplaces and Heaters

- Before starting a fire in the fireplace, remove all decorations (including stockings hung by the fireplace) and be sure the flue is open.
- Do not burn wrapping papers in the fireplace. They can burn extremely fast, throwing off sparks and can ignite creosote that has previously accumulated in the chimney.
- Always use a screen in front of the fireplace. Also consider using a fire-resistant carpet or mat (made for fireplaces) on the floor in front of the fireplace.
- Keep all combustible materials, including wrapping paper at least three feet away from any heater - space heaters need space.
- When plugging in electric heaters, make sure that the outlet was designed to handle the load. Be safe. Do not plug anything else into the socket with the heater.
- When using kerosene heaters, make sure you only use the correct fuel. The wrong fuel may cause a fire or explosion. Only fill to 90 percent. Kerosene will expand once indoors. After the heater has cooled, take it outside to refuel.

Cooking

- Cooking-related fires are the No. 1 cause of fires in the home.
- Do not leave cooking food unattended. If you must leave, turn off all cooking appliances.

- Keep combustible materials such as towels, potholders, papers, etc., away from heat sources on the stove or oven. Don't wear loose fitting clothing while cooking.
- Do not attempt to move a pan of grease that is on fire. Put a lid on the pan to smother the fire, then turn off the heat, or use an ABC-rated fire extinguisher. Alert your family so they can evacuate safely.
- Be sure to turn pot handles towards the back of the stove. Small children are generally curious and may reach for a handle to see what is in the pot. They could get burned.
- Keep pets off cooking surfaces and countertops to prevent them from knocking things onto the burner.

General Fire Safety

One of the best ways to protect yourself and your family from a house fire is by having working smoke alarms in your home. By providing early warning of fire, smoke alarms can double your chances of escaping a fire safely. Annually, there are about 13,000 fires in Ohio, in the place we feel safest - our homes. Follow these tips to keep you, your family and your belongings safe from fire:

- Check your smoke alarms monthly. Only a working smoke alarm can save your life.
- Replace the batteries in your smoke alarms twice a year. When you change your clocks for Daylight Savings, change your batteries.
- Install smoke alarms on each level of your home and sleeping areas. Sleep with your bedroom door closed.
- Make sure overnight guests also know your fire escape plan.
- Install a carbon monoxide detector if you have any appliance or device that has a flame - stove, water heater, furnace, fireplace, space heater, etc.
- Do not use your stove or oven to heat your house.

Smoking-related fires are a leading cause of fire fatalities in Ohio. Provide plenty of large, deep ashtrays and check them frequently. Cigarette butts can smolder in the trash and cause a fire, so completely douse any smoking material with water before discarding.

- After a party, always check on, between and under upholstery and cushions and inside trashcans for smoking materials that may be smoldering.
- Keep matches and lighters up high, out of sight and out of reach from children - preferably in a locked cabinet. If your child sees you lighting candles or starting the fireplace, they may think it's OK for them to do it. Teach your kids about fire safety. Matches and lighters are "tools" for adults, not "toys" for children.
- If a fire occurs in your home, GET OUT, STAY OUT and CALL for help.
- Contact your local fire department for additional fire safety information or for help to conduct a winter fire safety check of your home.

In Case of Fire, Follow Your Escape Plan

Remember to GET OUT, STAY OUT and CALL 911 or your local emergency phone number.

- If closed doors or handles are warm, use your second way out. Never open doors that are warm to the touch.
- Crawl low under smoke.
- Go to your outside meeting place and then call for help.
- If smoke, heat or flames block your exit routes, stay in the room with the doors closed. Place a wet towel under the door and call the fire department or 911. Open a window and wave a brightly colored cloth or flashlight to signal for help.

Use Caution with Fire Extinguishers

Use a portable fire extinguisher only if you've been trained by the fire department and in the following conditions:

- The fire is confined to a small area and is not growing.
- The room is not filled with smoke.
- Everyone else has exited the building.
- The fire department has been called.
- Remember the word PASS when using a fire extinguisher:
 - Pull the pin and hold the extinguisher with the nozzle pointing away from you.
 - Aim low. Point the extinguisher at the base of the fire.
 - Squeeze the lever slowly and evenly.
 - Sweep the nozzle from side to side.

Fire Safety Resources:

[State Fire Marshal website](#)

[American Red Cross - Home Fire Safety](#)

[Fire Safety Infographic - Alarms.org](#)
