

HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS

COOKING

Cooking is the top cause of holiday fires, according to the [United State Fire Administration](#) (USFA). The most common culprit is food that's left unattended. It's easy to get distracted; take a pot holder with you when you leave the kitchen as a reminder that you have something on the stove. Make sure to keep a kitchen fire extinguisher that's rated for all types of fires, and check that smoke detectors are working.

If you're planning to deep-fry your holiday turkey, do it outside, on a flat, level surface at least 10 feet from the house.

CANDLES

The incidence of candle fires is four times higher during December than during other months. According to the [National Fire Protection Association](#), four of the five most dangerous days of the year for residential candle fires are Christmas/Christmas Eve and New Year's/New Year's Eve. (The fifth is Halloween.)

To reduce the danger, maintain about a foot of space between the candle and anything that can burn. Set candles on sturdy bases or cover with hurricane globes. Never leave flames unattended. Before bed, walk through each room to make sure candles are blown out. For atmosphere without worry, consider flameless LED candles.

CHRISTMAS TREES

It takes less than 30 seconds for a dry tree to engulf a room in flames, according to the Building and Fire Research Laboratory of the [National Institute for Standards and Technology](#). "They make turpentine out of pine trees," notes Tom Olshanski, spokesman for the USFA. "A Christmas tree is almost explosive when it goes."



HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS

10 TIPS TO PROTECT YOUR HOME DURING THE HOLIDAYS

HOLIDAY THEFT

Theft overall tends to rise in the months of November and December. Best thing to do is to make sure you secure everything that you can. Lock up cars, trucks, and homes.



LEAVE THE LIGHTS ON

Thieves usually don't approach homes that appear to be occupied. Leave on outside lights at night (or set them with a timer) and when you leave the house during the day; leave on some of the lights inside the home to give the appearance that someone is home.



PACKAGE DELIVERY

More and more people are purchasing gifts online and having them shipped to their home. With this trend, more people are having packages stolen right off their front porch. If you're expecting packages, request signature confirmation or have a trusted neighbor hold on to it for you.



COOKING HAZARDS

A fried turkey is delicious. A fried house due to a deep fryer accident is not. Make sure you read the instructions on how to prepare your turkey safely and please, use the deep fryer OUTSIDE of the house.



DECORATION HAZARDS

Speaking of fires, Christmas tree fires can be devastating for what is normally such a beacon of happiness. If you have a live tree, make sure that it has water every day, and ensure that any lights you use are checked for breaks or exposed wires.



CREATIVE DISPOSAL

Dispose of your presents boxes creatively - placing that 60" TV box outside on trash day after Christmas is just asking for trouble. Try and break down boxes and other packaging as to not give away the wonderful gifts your family received.



SOCIAL MEDIA

In today's inter-connected age, it's important to be very careful about what you share on social media. Be very careful about what you post and if you do decide to share your gifts, please make sure you don't have your location tagged to the post.



TRAVEL

If you're traveling to visit family or going on a holiday vacation, wait until after your trip to post about it. Have a good friend or neighbor check on your house every couple of days to give you and update.



DECORATIONS & LIGHTING

Make sure not to run extension cords through windows or garage doors. Just the slightest crack can expose a home to thieves.



WHO'S AT THE DOOR

Criminals can try and scope at your home posing as a delivery person or someone looking for charitable donations. Be cautious when talking to people you're unfamiliar with and don't let them in your home



USFA

To minimize risk, buy a fresh tree with intact needles, get a fresh cut on the trunk, and water it every day. A well-watered tree is almost impossible to ignite. Keep the tree away from heat sources, such as a fireplace or radiator, and out of traffic patterns. If you're using live garlands and other greenery, keep them at least three feet away from heating sources.

No matter how well the tree is watered, it will start to dry out after about four weeks, so take it down after the holidays. Artificial trees don't pose much of a fire hazard; just make sure yours is flame-retardant.

DECORATIVE LIGHTS

Inspect [light strings](#), and throw out any with frayed or cracked wires or broken sockets. When decorating, don't run more than three strings of lights end to end. Extension cords should be in good condition and UL-rated for indoor or outdoor use. Check outdoor receptacles to make sure the ground fault interrupters don't trip. If they trip repeatedly, that's a sign that they need to be replaced.

When hanging lights outside, avoid using nails or staples, which can damage the wiring and increase the risk of a fire. Instead, use UL-rated clips or hangers. And take lights down within 90 days, says John Drengenberg, director of consumer safety for Underwriters Laboratories. *"If you leave them up all year round, squirrels chew on them and they get damaged by weather."*

KIDS PLAYING WITH MATCHES

The number of blazes — and, tragically, the number of deaths — caused by children playing with fire goes up significantly during the holidays. From January through March, 13% of fire deaths are the result of children playing with fire, the USFA reports; in December, that percentage doubles. So keep matches and lighters out of kids' reach. *"We tend to underestimate the power of these tools,"* says Meri-K Appy, a fire and life safety expert and contractor with Vision 20/20. *"A match or lighter could be more deadly than a loaded gun in the hands of a small child."*

FIREPLACES

Soot can harden on chimney walls as flammable creosote, so before the fireplace season begins, have your chimney inspected to see if it needs cleaning. Screen the fireplace to prevent embers from popping out onto the floor or carpet, and never use flammable liquids to start a fire in the fireplace. Only burn seasoned wood — no wrapping paper.

When cleaning out the fireplace, put embers in a metal container and set them outside to cool for 24 hours before disposal.

Source: <http://mysaferiverside.org/2017/12/11/holiday-safety-riverside/>