

Holiday Fire Safety

Q1. Why is fire safety a concern during the holidays?

A1. Statistics show that one in three fire deaths occur during the months of November, December and January.

Q2. Why are there so many fire fatalities during those three months?

A2. Typically fires happen when people get preoccupied or distracted from what we are doing, or we let our guard down.

And with the busyness of the holidays, it can be very easy to get distracted or let our guard down.

Add to that the likelihood that we might have a drink or two – or more - during the holidays and it becomes very easy to forget about the cooking pot on the stove or let a burning cigarette fall onto the couch.

That's when a tragedy can happen.

Q3. What are some of the leading causes of fires during the holidays and what can people do to prevent them?

A3. Cooking is the leading cause of home fires - people who leave their cooking unattended.

So it is really important to stay in the kitchen while you are cooking.

If you have to leave for any reason, turn off the stove.

- Another leading cause is careless smoking. A typical scenario is a person will sit down on the couch with a drink and a cigarette. They may be tired at the end of the day or they get caught up with what's on TV. It doesn't take much of a distraction for burning ashes to fall unnoticed on the couch or behind a pillow. And very quickly a fire can occur.
So if you know someone who smokes encourage them to smoke outside. Make sure they use large deep ashtrays. Empty ashes into a metal container – not in the garbage – and put it outside. And people should never smoke in bed.
- Cooking and smoking are activities that require careful attention. When you add alcohol to the mix, the combination can lead to disastrous and often fatal results. Many fire deaths are caused by people attempting to cook or smoke while under the influence of alcohol.
If you drink, drink responsibly and keep an eye on others in your household who are drinking.

Q4. I see you've brought in some smoke alarms. Can you talk about the importance of smoke alarms?

- Smoke alarms can be the difference between living or dying in a fire.
- Fire spreads so quickly that you may have less than 3 minutes to escape a fire in your home. That means you need as much time as possible to safely escape.
- Only working smoke alarms provide the early detection of fire you need to safely escape.
- Here are a few examples of smoke alarms. They can cost as little as \$14. Make sure you have one on every story of your home and outside all sleeping areas.
- And just as important as smoke alarms, you have to make sure everyone in your home knows what to do when the smoke alarms sound in an emergency.
- Practice a home escape plan with everyone in the home. Have two ways out of every room, if possible. Make sure someone is responsible for helping young children, older adults or people with disabilities to leave the home. Choose a meeting place outside where everyone can be accounted for.
- And remember to install carbon monoxide alarms outside all sleeping areas of your home.

Q5. What are some other things that people can do to prevent fires during the holidays?

A5. Christmas Trees:

- Make a fresh cut across the trunk about an inch from the original cut when you bring the tree into the house for decorating. Use a tree stand that holds plenty of water.
- Trees are thirsty. They may drink up to four litres of water per day, so be sure to check daily and supply fresh water as needed.
- Place your tree away from fireplaces, radiators, television sets and other sources of heat.
- **NEVER** use lighted candles on or near a Christmas tree and avoid the use of combustible decorations.

Lights

- People should remember to inspect their decorative lights every year before using them. If wiring is frayed or worn, or if the lights are old, they should be replaced.
- Turn off Christmas tree lights when you leave and before you go to bed at night.
- Make sure lights are used in accordance with manufacturers' recommendations.

Candles

- Candles are another cause of fires across the province, especially during the holidays.
- If you are going to use candles, make sure you place them in a sturdy holder so they can't be tipped over.
- Keep candles away from anything that can burn and always blow them out before leaving the room.
- Keep candles away from children and pets, keep them out of bedrooms and keep them away from the Christmas tree.