



Fire & Life

Safety News

Important information from Clackamas Fire District 1



Make your Holiday safe and enjoyable by following these important safety tips:

Holiday Fire Safety

Every year throughout the United States during the holiday season tragedy strikes hundreds of families. Statistics show that fires related to candles, Christmas trees, holiday lighting and portable space heaters cause a dramatic increase in residential fires between Thanksgiving and New Years. Clackamas Fire District #1 wants you to have a safe holiday season. Please review the following safety tips with your family.

Trees

- When purchasing an artificial tree, look for the label "Fire Resistant."
- When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness because a fresh tree is less of a fire hazard. The tree should be green, needles are hard to pull from branches and when bent between your fingers, needles do not break. The trunk butt should be sticky with resin, and when tapped on the ground, the tree should not lose many needles.
- Cut a few inches off the trunk of your tree to expose the fresh wood. This allows for better water absorption and will help to keep your tree from drying out and becoming a fire hazard.
- When setting up a tree at home, place it away from fireplaces, radiators or portable heaters. Place the tree out of the way of traffic and don't allow it to block doorways.
- Be sure to keep the stand filled with water, because heated rooms can dry live trees out rapidly.

Lights

- Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights, and a person touching a branch could be electrocuted.



- Before using lights outdoors, check labels to be sure they have been certified for outdoor use. To hold lights in place, string them through hooks or insulated staples, not nails or tacks. Never pull or tug lights to remove them.
- Check all tree lights-even if you've just purchased them-before hanging them on your tree. Make sure all the bulbs work and that there are no frayed wires, broken sockets or loose connections.
- Plug all outdoor electric decorations into circuits with ground fault circuit interrupters to avoid potential shocks.
- Turn off all lights when you go to bed or leave the house. The lights could short out and start a fire.

Decorations

- Use only non-combustible or flame-resistant materials to trim a tree. Choose tinsel or artificial icicles of plastic or nonleaded metals.
- Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens. Always use non-flammable holders, and place candles where they will not be knocked down.
- In homes with small children, take special care to avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable, keep trimmings with small removable parts out of the reach of children to avoid the child swallowing or inhaling small pieces. Avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food that may tempt a child to eat them.
- Wear gloves to avoid eye and skin irritation while decorating with spun glass "angel hair." Follow container directions carefully to avoid lung irritation while decorating with artificial snow sprays.
- Remove all wrapping papers, bags, paper, ribbons and bows from tree and fireplace areas after gifts are opened. These items can pose suffocation and choking hazards to a small child, or can cause a fire if near flame.

Candles

Did you know that the number of candle-related residential fires in Oregon has seen a dramatic increase in the last decade. Candle related fire significantly increase during winter holidays.

- Stay in the same room with burning candles; never leave them burning unattended.
- Keep candles away from things that can burn.
- Place candles out of reach of children and pets.
- Keep wicks trimmed to one-quarter inch.
- Avoid candles with combustible items embedded in them such as twigs, flowers or leaves.
- Remember to make sure you have working smoke alarms.



Winter Fire Safety

Fireplaces

- Before lighting any fire, remove all greens, boughs, papers, and other decorations from fireplace area. Check to see that flue is open.
- Do not burn wrapping papers in the fireplace. A flash fire may result as wrappings ignite suddenly and burn intensely.

Chimney

- Chimney maintenance is vital to your family's safety.
- Have your chimney inspected by a certified chimney sweep and cleaned on a regular basis. When possible, burn seasoned woods (dryness of the wood is more important than hard wood versus soft wood). Smaller, hotter fires will burn more completely and produce less smoke than larger fires. Do not burn cardboard boxes or trash, as they can spark a chimney fire. Install stovepipe thermometers, which help monitor flue temperatures where wood stoves are in use, then adjust burning practices as needed.

Portable Heaters

- Give heaters space. Put at least 36 inches of empty space between the

heater and everything else, like furniture, curtains, papers and people.

- Vacuum and clean the dust and lint from all heaters. A buildup of dust and lint can cause a fire.
- Check the cord on portable electric heaters. If the cord gets hot, frayed or cracked have the heater serviced.
- Never use extension cords with portable electric heaters; it is a common cause of fires.
- Turn off portable heaters when family members leave the house or are sleeping.
- An adult should always be present when a space heater is used around children.

- Make sure your portable electric heater is UL approved and has a tip-over shut off function.

Woodstove and Fireplace Safety

- Have a certified chimney sweep clean and inspect your chimney and fireplace for creosote build-up, cracks, crumbling bricks and obstructions.
- Place fireplace or wood stove ashes outdoors in a covered metal container at least three feet away from anything that burns.
- A flue fire can ruin your chimney

or stovepipe. To prevent flue fires, burn dry, well-seasoned wood. Burn small, hot fires. Don't burn trash.

- Always use a fireplace screen made of sturdy metal or heat-tempered glass to prevent sparks from escaping. (If children are present, use a special child-guard screen as a barrier for your woodstove.)

Smoke Alarms and Home Escape Plans

- Working smoke alarms alert you to a fire and more than double your chances of surviving a fire. In a fire, minutes could mean the difference between life and death.
- Install smoke alarms in every home, on every level, outside each sleeping area and in each bedroom.
- Test and vacuum your smoke alarms each month to make sure they are working.
- Smoke alarms ten years old or older need to be replaced with new units.
- When the smoke alarm sounds, get out fast!
- Plan your escape, know two ways out of every room.
- Practice your escape plan with your whole family at least twice a year.

