

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SUFFOLK FIRE & RESCUE PROVIDES HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS

SUFFOLK, VA (November 30, 2020) The winter holidays are a wonderful time for family get-togethers and celebrations, but Suffolk Fire & Rescue wants to remind our citizens that they are also a time when Fire Departments nationwide see a significant increase in preventable home fires.

Hundreds of civilians die needlessly each winter season as a result of fires involving Christmas trees, candles and unattended cooking. By taking some simple precautionary steps, everyone can enjoy the lights and festivities and remain safe while doing so.

Fire Safety for Holiday Decorating and Entertaining:

- Test your smoke alarms and tell your guests about your home fire escape plan.
- Choose decorations that are flame resistant or flame retardant.
- Place Christmas trees at least 3 feet from fireplaces, heating vents, wall furnaces, and other heat producing appliances which may dry out the tree.
- Water live Christmas trees on a regular basis, especially with many people decorating earlier this year (trees should have fresh green needles) and dispose of them safely within 4 weeks of placing them.

- Keep lit candles away from decorations and other things that can burn.
- Use lights that have the label of an independent testing laboratory. Some lights are only for indoor or outdoor use, but not both. Check your labels carefully.
- Replace any string lights with worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections.
- Connect no more than three strands of mini light sets and a maximum of 50 bulbs for screw-in bulbs. Use extension cords with care and don't place under rugs or in paths of travel.
- Use clips, not nails, to hang lights so the cords do not get damaged.
- Blow out lit candles when leaving the room or going to bed. Keep children and pets away from lit candles, and keep matches and lighters out of reach.
- Turn off all string lights before leaving home or going to bed.
- Do not burn Christmas tree branches or wrapping paper in fireplaces. A flash fire may result as wrappings ignite suddenly and burn intensely.
- Stay in the kitchen while cooking on the stovetop.
- Do not remove fireplace embers or ash while still hot, or if you do, place them in a metal container with a lid and cover them with water. Do not place them in a plastic or paper bag or other container that is not fire-resistant. Do not dispose of them indoors, on a deck, or close to your home or another structure.

For more information on home fire safety, please contact the Suffolk Fire & Rescue Department at 757-514-4550, or email fireprevbureau@suffolkva.us.

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