

## **NEWS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **SUFFOLK FIRE & RESCUE PROVIDES HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS**

SUFFOLK, VA (December 6, 2021) 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 757-514-4540, or email [fireprevbureau@suffolkva.us](mailto:fireprevbureau@suffolkva.us).

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