

## Holiday Fire Safety Tips

The countdown to Christmas has begun. It's that time of the year for mistletoe, holly, and unfortunately, house fires. With colder weather comes more house fires, and with the holiday season, that number increases even more.

Here are some potential causes for holiday fires and how to prevent them...

With all the added lights for decorations, make sure that extension cords and outlets are not overloaded. It's best to avoid using those lightweight, household extension cords for a lot of lights. If power strips are used, make sure they have a breaker to prevent an overload.

Natural Christmas trees pose a hazard if they dry out. Cut off at least an inch from the bottom of the tree and immediately put it into a stand with water. In the first 48 hours, a tree can really suck up the water, so be vigilant in keeping the stand full of water at all times. Once a tree dries out, it would burn up quickly during a fire which would accelerate the fire spread in a room.

Candles are another cause of holiday fires. Forgetting to blow them out before leaving the house or before going to bed is one issue. Setting them too close to combustibles or using candles that could tip over is another problem. Please use them wisely.

Cooking is a potential cause for house fires year 'round. It's just that many homes see an increase in cooking during the holidays. Be especially alert to cooking safely during this time.

Over the years, I've seen a number of December house fires. There aren't many house fires that are worse than seeing a family displaced at Christmastime.

Now to change gears from holiday fire safety to another holiday topic...

How often do you scratch your head and wonder what to get someone for Christmas? Why not give them a battery-operated smoke alarm, carbon monoxide alarm, or fire extinguisher? It's something most everyone could use and could be a lifesaver someday.

Fire code requires a smoke alarm and carbon monoxide alarm on every floor, including the basement, in every home. Except for newer homes, I estimate that most homes do not come into total compliance with the requirement for them on every floor. Every residence should have a fire extinguisher as well, and every resident should know how to use it.

Look at your own home first. Does it meet the requirements for alarms and does it have a fire extinguisher? If not, add any shortfalls to your own Christmas list. Maybe someone needs a gift idea for you, too.

We don't want to see anyone's Christmas ruined. Parents, please talk to your children about holiday fire safety, too.

From everyone at the Columbus Fire Department, have a safe and blessed Christmas.