



Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor  
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# FIRE DEPARTMENT

CITY OF NEW YORK

## FIRE SAFETY EDUCATION

# WINTER & HOLIDAY FIRE SAFETY

The winter season brings about many changes in your home. The heating system kicks on and you prepare for the holidays by decorating and cooking holiday feasts. **The winter and holiday season is also the fire season.** More than 1/3 of home fires happen during the months of December, January and February. Most fires and injuries are preventable by taking precautions that can make the difference between a happy and safe holiday or a holiday tragedy.

**FIRE REMAINS THE MAJOR CAUSE OF DEATH IN THE HOME, WITH YOUNG CHILDREN AND OLDER ADULTS MOST OFTEN THE VICTIMS.**

*Don't underestimate your risk of fire!*

## FUEL CONCERNS

Keeping warm in your home should fuel concerns for the safety of your family. During the months of December, January and February, home-heating equipment (central heating units, portable and fixed space heaters and fireplaces) is the second leading cause of home fires.

The major causes of home heating fires are poorly maintained systems, placing space heaters too close to combustible items and flaws in construction and installation of the heating units.

## SAFELY HEAT YOUR HOME BY FOLLOWING THESE GUIDELINES:

- Have a qualified technician install all new equipment.
- Have a qualified professional inspect your equipment annually. The inspection will ensure that the system is maintained in proper working order and identify if any parts require repair or replacement.
- Schedule regular cleanings of your boiler, furnace and hot water heater, including the chimney and chimney connectors.
- Have your wood-burning stove or fireplace inspected every year by a professional, including the chimney and connectors.
- Keep a glass or metal screen in front of fireplace openings to prevent embers or sparks from jumping out.

**BEFORE GOING TO SLEEP BE SURE YOUR FIREPLACE FIRE IS OUT!**



Issued by the FDNY

Office of  
Fire Safety Education &  
Office of Public Information

For more Fire Safety info visit the  
FDNY Websites  
[www.nyc.gov/fdny](http://www.nyc.gov/fdny)  
or [www.fdneyfirezone.org](http://www.fdneyfirezone.org)

**FIRE DEPARTMENT  
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You can also write to the NYC Fire Department, Office of Fire Safety Education for Fire Safety Information in other languages.

# ELECTRIC SPACE HEATERS

When purchasing an electric space heater, look for heaters with automatic shut-off features.

## **GIVE SPACE HEATERS SPACE**

Heaters should be placed at least 3 feet from any combustible material such as bedding and furniture.

- **Never use an extension cord** with a space heater.
- Inspect the electrical cord before each use for damage.
- Keep young children and pets away from space heaters.
- Only use equipment that has the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) Mark.
- Avoid using electric space heaters in bathrooms or other areas where they may come in contact with water.
- **Turn off/unplug the space heater** whenever you leave the room or go to sleep.

*Never use the kitchen oven or gas range to heat your home or apartment. Such improper use could cause dangerous levels of carbon monoxide to accumulate causing severe illness and possible death.*

*The use of kerosene or propane space heaters is strictly prohibited and illegal in New York City.*

*The use of these types of space heaters poses a high risk of death and injury.*



Electric space heater with thermostat and automatic shut-off.



Kerosene space heaters are not legal to use in NYC.

# ELECTRIC BLANKETS

With the rising costs of heating energy, you may choose to use an electric blanket to help keep you warm on a cold winter's night. However, **misused or damaged blankets can easily become an ignition source for a fire.**

**FOR A SAFE NIGHT'S SLEEP**  
*follow these recommendations for using electric blankets:*



- Only use electric blankets that have the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) Mark.
- Replace all electric blankets that are more than 10 years old. (99% of blankets fires have been caused by blankets 10 years or older.)
- Purchase blankets with an automatic safety shut-off. (The device will shut-off the blanket if the temperature gets too high.)

- Always buy new electric blankets; second-hand blankets may not be safe.
- Replace any electric blanket that has broken or frayed cords or has scorch marks.
- Avoid tucking the electric blanket in at the sides of the bed.
- Avoid placing other blankets or comforters on top of an electric blanket while in use.
- It is best to warm the bed with your electric blanket and turn it off before going to bed.

**Electric blankets also present a burn risk to those who cannot feel heat or are unable to react appropriately.** Therefore, never place an electric blanket on a baby, small child or anyone with physical limitations that may prevent them from turning the control off or removing the blanket from their body.

# BE ELECTRICALLY SAFE

**W**orn, damaged or improperly used electrical cords cause most home electrical fires.

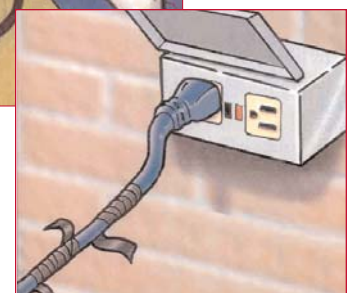
Take a few minutes this season to **INSPECT THE CONDITION** of your electrical cords, extension cords, plugs and outlets to make your home as safe as possible.

- Do all the electrical appliances and cords have the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) Mark?
- Are cords out from beneath furniture and rugs or carpeting?
- Do extension cords carry more than their proper load?
- Are any outlets or switches unusually warm or hot to the touch?

- Do all outlets and switches have cover plates?
- Is any cover plate discolored? (Discoloration could indicate that the wiring behind the plate is overheating.)
- Do all electrical plugs fit snugly into their outlets?
- Are any outlets overloaded with more than two appliances?

**Carefully inspect new and used holiday lights for cracked or frayed wires. Do not use broken bulbs on Christmas trees.**

**Remember extension cords are for temporary use only and not to be used as a permanent extension of a home's wiring system.**



# CHRISTMAS TREE SAFETY TIPS

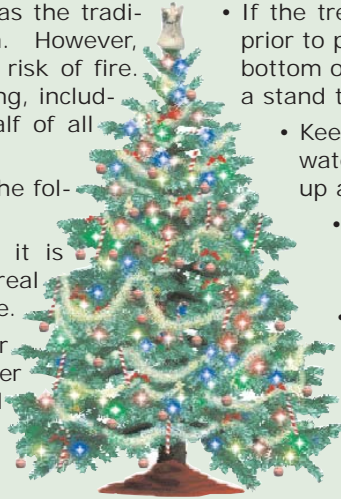
Christmas trees are enjoyed in many homes as the traditional centerpiece of the Holiday celebration. However, both real and artificial trees pose an increased risk of fire. Christmas tree fires do happen. Defective lighting, including electrical cords and plugs, cause almost half of all Christmas tree fires.

Protect your family and your neighbors with the following fire prevention tips:

- When choosing an artificial tree, be sure it is labeled as fire-retardant. When choosing a real tree, select the freshest-looking tree available.
- Select a tree that is an appropriate size for the room. Keep in mind that trees look smaller when they are outside, and tree toppers and stands will add to the final height of the tree.

## REAL Trees

- Test for freshness by gently grasping a branch between your thumb and forefinger and pulling it towards you. Very few needles should come off.
- Shake or bounce the tree on its stump. If an excessive amount of green needles fall to the ground, the tree may not be fresh.
- Buy your tree early. Most tree lots receive only one shipment of trees. Trees don't become fresher sitting in a lot.
- If you don't plan on putting the tree up right away, make a one half inch fresh cut off the bottom of the trunk and place the tree in a 5 gallon bucket of warm water. Store the tree in cool temperatures, but above freezing.



- If the tree has been stored for more than three days, prior to putting it up, make another one inch cut off the bottom of the trunk and immediately place the tree into a stand that holds at least a half-gallon of water.

- Keep the water level above the cut and check the water level daily. (Initially, a fresh tree may soak up a gallon of water per day.)

- No water additives such as aspirin, sugar, or commercial fire retardant are necessary. Plain tap water is best!

- Place the tree away (at least 3 ft) from heating system air registers, fireplaces and other heat sources.

- Try to position the tree near an electrical outlet to minimize use of extension cords.

- Adequately support the tree with a sturdy stand designed not to tip over.

- Do not use electric lights on metallic trees (use remote spot or reflective lights).

- Do not use lighted candles or other flaming devices on or near your tree.

- Whenever possible, use decorations made with flame-resistant, flame-retardant or non-combustible materials.

- Unplug the tree lights when out of the room and before going to sleep.

**Even if you keep your tree properly watered, it will naturally start to dry out. Discard the tree immediately after the holiday.**

# HOLIDAY FEASTING

The holidays are a time for celebration and that means more cooking! Regrettably, cooking fires remain the leading cause of home fires and fire injuries. Unattended cooking accounts for 33% of these fires. Other leading causes are placing combustible items too close to the heat source and various electrical defects.

There are a variety of situations that lead to unattended cooking fires. The most common is when the cook becomes distracted and leaves the kitchen.

In order to drastically reduce your risk of a cooking fire, follow this recipe for safety:

- Stay in the kitchen, don't leave cooking food unattended. (stand by your pan!)
- Wear short or tight fitting sleeves. (long loose sleeves are more likely to catch on fire or get caught on pot handles)
- Enforce a "kid-free zone" of 3 feet around your stove.
- Keep the area around the stove clear of towels, papers pot holders or anything that could burn.
- Cook at indicated temperatures settings rather than higher settings.
- have a pot lid handy to smother a pan fire. Do not attempt to pick up the pot or pan. Shut off the heat and cover the fire with a lid.

## DO NOT USE WATER!

**It will cause splashing and spread the fire.**

- treat burns immediately with cool running water.

## Don't Let Your Turkey Fryer, Fry You!

In recent years deep-frying turkeys has become increasingly popular, however this new tradition is a recipe for a holiday tragedy!

The use of turkey fryers are considered a serious injury and fire risk because:

- As the turkey is placed in the hot oil, oil may spill from the fryer onto the burner causing a fire.

- Turkey fryers can easily tip over, spilling the hot oil onto anyone nearby.

- Most turkey fryers do not have an automatic thermostat control. With no temperature control the oil could overheat to the point of combustion and cause a fire.

- The turkey fryers, including the lid and handles get extreme hot and may cause burns.

- Partially frozen turkeys placed into the fryer can cause a spillover effect.

Underwriters Laboratories (UL) has decided not to safety certify any turkey fryers due to the increasing number of fires and burn injuries related to their use.



**THIS CAN EASILY TURN INTO THIS.**



**DON'T LET IT HAPPEN TO YOU**

# HOLIDAY ENTERTAINING AND SMOKING MATERIALS

More people die in fires started by carelessly discarded smoking materials such as cigarettes butts, cigarette ashes, lighters and ashtrays, than any other type of fire. The most common materials to first ignite are mattresses and bedding, followed by trash and upholstered furniture. Fires caused by smoking materials often smolder, sometimes for hours before the first flame.

When planning your holiday party, also plan to take precautions to prevent a fire in your home.

- Provide plenty of large deep ashtrays and check them frequently.
- After entertaining in your home always check on, between and under upholstery and cushions and inside trashcans for cigarette butts that may be smoldering.
- Completely douse cigarette butts with water before discarding.
- Don't smoke in bed or lying down, especially if you are drowsy, medicated or have been drinking alcohol.
- Consider additional smoke alarms in your home, specifically a photoelectric type, which is the most reliable for smoldering type fires.
- Smokers are seven times more likely than nonsmokers to have a fire in their home.

## Candle Light!

Candle fires have tripled in the past ten years. In fact, candle fires peak on Christmas day, followed by New Years and Christmas Eve

How does a little flame become so dangerous?

More than 33 % of candle fires occurred when the candles were left unattended or abandoned. Roughly 25 % of the fires occurred because something combustible such as curtains or paper was too close to the flame. Half the people killed by candle fires in the home were younger than 20, with most of the victims between the ages of 5 and 9.

If you burn candles for decorative or ritual purposes, make your home safer by:

- Using candles with flame protective non-combustible shades or globes.
- Using a sturdy metal, glass or ceramic candle holder.
- Avoiding the use of candles with embedded combustible decorative items.
- Placing candles at least 4 feet away from curtains, draperies, decorations, blinds and bedding.
- Placing candles out of reach of small children and pets.
- Refraining from using decorative/floral candle rings.
- Extinguishing candles before leaving the room .
- Extinguishing candles when they burn within two inches of the holder.
- Never leaving burning candles unattended.



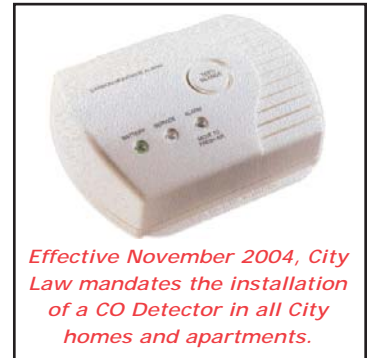
## The Silent Killer, Carbon Monoxide!

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless, tasteless and toxic gas. Nicknamed "*the silent killer*", carbon monoxide is totally undetectable by human senses.

Since carbon monoxide is a by-product of incomplete combustion, any fuel-burning appliance, vehicle or tool that is inadequately vented or maintained can be a potential source of carbon monoxide gas.

People are at an increased risk of carbon monoxide poisoning during the winter months. Well-insulated, airtight homes (primarily newer construction) and malfunctioning heating equipment can produce dangerously high and potentially deadly concentrations of carbon monoxide.

Protect yourself and your family by purchasing and installing carbon monoxide detector alarms. A properly working carbon monoxide detector alarm can provide an early warning, before deadly gases build up to dangerous levels.



## Is Your Smoke Alarm Working?

A smoke alarm is the single most valuable life-saving device you can have in your home. An operable smoke alarm will cut your chances of dying in a fire, nearly in half.

While 97 out of 100 homes have a smoke alarm, more than 33 % of these homes are not protected because the smoke alarms don't work.

**REPLACE THE BATTERIES TWICE A YEAR!**

"Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house,  
Not a candle was lit, as they were all blown out."  
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,  
With smoke and carbon monoxide alarms installed over their heads!"



FIRE DEPARTMENT, CITY OF NEW YORK  
FDNY FIRE SAFETY EDUCATION UNIT  
**Your Safety Is Our Mission**

HOT DOG, the FDNY  
Children's Fire Safety Mascot

