

## CANDLES, LIGHTING, and DECORATIONS

- Store matches and lighters up high, out of the reach of children, preferably in a locked cabinet.
- Always unplug Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to sleep.
- Never use lit candles to decorate a tree, and place them well away from tree branches.

## HOME SAFETY

- A home fire escape plan should include: working smoke alarms on every level of the home and outside all sleeping areas; two ways out of each room; unobstructed and easy-to-use exits; a meeting place outside; a posted emergency phone number for the fire department; and practicing the plan at least twice a year with every member of the household.
- If there are infants or family members with mobility limitations, someone in the household should plan to assist them.
- Make sure that doors needed for escape can be opened easily and that windows are not nailed or painted shut.
- React to the sound of a smoke alarm immediately and make getting out your top priority.
- Never go back inside the home for any reason.



**Know 2 ways out and use 9-1-1 once outside!**

## STATISTICS

- In 1998, there were 300 Christmas trees fires in U.S. homes, resulting in 11 injuries and \$8 million in direct property damage.
- Decorating with lit candles can also be a fire hazard. Between 1994 and 1998, there were 9,930 home fires per year caused by candles, with an annual average of 119 deaths, 1,043 injuries and \$144.5 million in property damage associated.
- Candle fires reached a 19-year high of 12,540 in 1998, resulting in 157 deaths, 1,106 civilian injuries and \$176.1 million in property damage.
- Unattended, abandoned or inadequately controlled candles are the leading cause of home candle fires (37%), followed by leaving candles too close to combustibles (19%), according to annual averages from 1994-98. Nine percent were started by children playing with candles.
- December is the peak month for candle fires, with nearly twice the average number of incidents.
- Almost half (44%) of home candle fires start in the bedroom.
- In 1998, Christmas trees were the first item ignited in 300 home fires, resulting in 11 injuries and \$8 million in direct property damage.
- The leading cause of Christmas tree fires and property damage was short circuit or ground fault (21%). In this category, electrical failure other than short circuit ranked second in number of fires, injuries and property damage with the exception of the "other known" category.
- Cords and plugs were the leading type of equipment involved in the ignition of Christmas trees.

## Tips to help keep you safe this holiday season



## HOLIDAY SAFETY

Christmas	December 25
Hanukkah	December 25
Kwanzaa	December 26-January 3
Posadas	December 19-24



**San Bernardino County  
Fire Department**

Community Safety Division  
620 South "E" Street  
San Bernardino, CA 92415-0179  
909-386-8427  
[www.sbcfire.org](http://www.sbcfire.org)

## CHRISTMAS TREES

- When decorating Christmas trees, always use safe tree lights. (Some lights are designed only for indoor or outdoor use, but not both.) Larger tree lights should also have some type of reflector rather than a bare bulb and all lights should be listed by a testing laboratory.
- Never use electric lights on a metal tree.
- Try to keep live trees as moist as possible by giving them plenty of water daily. Do not purchase a tree that is dry or dropping needles.
- Choose a sturdy tree stand designed not to tip over.
- When purchasing an artificial tree, be sure it is labeled as fire-retardant.
- Children are fascinated with Christmas trees. Keep a watchful eye on them when around the tree and do not let them play with the wiring or lights.
- Make sure the tree is at least three feet (one meter) away from any heat source and try to position it near an outlet so that cords are not running long distances. Do not place the tree where it may block exits.
- Safely dispose of the tree when it begins dropping needles. Dried-out trees are highly flammable and should not be left in a house or garage, or placed against the house.



## CANDLES, LIGHTING, and DECORATIONS

- Use caution with holiday decorations and whenever possible, choose those made with flame-resistant, flame-retardant or non-combustible materials.
- Keep candles away from decorations and other combustible materials, and do not use candles to decorate Christmas Trees.
- Purchase only lights and electrical decorations bearing the name of an independent testing lab, and follow the manufacturer's instructions for installation and maintenance.
- Carefully inspect new and previously used light strings and replace damaged items before plugging lights in. Do not overload extension cords.
- Always unplug lights before replacing light bulbs or fuses.
- Don't mount lights in any way that can damage the cord's wire insulation (i. e., using clips, not nails).
- Keep children and pets away from light strings and electrical decorations.
- Turn off all light strings and decorations before leaving the house or going to bed.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions on how to use tree lights. Any string of lights with worn, frayed or broken cords or loose bulb connections should not be used.



## COOKING and ENTERTAINING



- Unattended cooking is the leading cause of home fires in the U.S. When cooking for holiday visitors, remember to keep an eye on the range.
- Provide plenty of large, deep ashtrays and check them frequently. Cigarette butts can smolder in the trash and cause a fire, so completely douse cigarette butts with water before discarding, or flush them down the toilet.
- After a party, always check on, between and under upholstery and cushions and inside trash cans for cigarette butts that may be smoldering.
- Keep matches and lighters up high, out of sight and reach of children (preferably in a locked cabinet). When smokers visit your home, ask them to keep their smoking materials with them so young children do not touch them.



## NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS

- Guns have always been a problem as the new year approaches, please take precautions. If you have a gun in your home, make sure it is kept unloaded and locked away at all times. Lock up and store ammunition in a separate location. Make sure children do not have access to the keys.