

Regarding you home . . .

Enjoy a Safe Holiday Season

The 2011 holidays are upon us. Unfortunately, this season of joy and celebration is one of the busiest times for home fires. In fact, the most fire deaths of the year are logged at this time.

Last December, fire investigators blamed a fatal blaze in an East Vancouver house on a short in the electrical system caused by a faulty extension cord connected to old Christmas lights. Seven people were in the house and three of them died. Such a tragedy when extension cords and lights are so inexpensive.

According to Health Canada, The Canada Safety Council and Fire Prevention Canada, the top problem areas are fireplaces, candles, lights & cords, and Christmas trees.

Fireplaces

Always use a spark screen when the fireplace is in use. Don't hang Christmas stockings and other decorations on or around a fireplace (including the mantel) while it's in use. Ensure the hearth is designed so it isn't easy to trip over.

Don't burn wrapping paper as the inks and finishes on it can ignite suddenly and burn intensely, which can cause a flash fire. Don't burn fir tree branches or needles or birch bark as they spark easily and could set nearby items alight.

Candles

Health Canada reports in Canada there are about 800 candle fires per year resulting in an average of 8 fire deaths, 115 injuries and \$26.2 million in property damage. They also report these fires are most common during the holidays.

Don't use decorative oil lamps with liquid fuel while there are children under the age of five in the house. Keep the fuel locked away - out of sight and out of reach. Place candles away from anything that could catch fire, including metal decorations as the paints and finishes can still be flammable. Keep candles in sturdy holders on stable surfaces away from children and pets. Never leave them burning unattended even for a few minutes.

Lights and cords

Use lights and cords that are certified by the Canadian Standards Association. They will have a "CSA" tag on them. Inspect them each year before using and again when you are taking them down. Toss out cracked bulbs, any sets with broken or cracked sockets, and anything with frayed, broken or exposed wires. Use outdoor lights outdoors and indoor lights indoors.

Many outdoor lights are too hot to be used indoors and indoor ones are too flimsy and lacking in weather protection for use outdoors. Be sure not to overload your wall sockets or string more than three sets of lights together on an extension cord.

Don't run cords underneath carpets. Turn off all lights before going to bed or being away. The lights should be left off if children are home without adult supervision. Keep an eye on pets to ensure they don't chew the wires.

Christmas trees

Purchase a freshly cut tree and water it daily. Time the purchase so you have it for 10 to 14 days and remove it as soon as the needles start falling off. Don't place it near your fireplace, heating ducts, sunny windows or radiators.

There's more

In addition to the steps above, have smokers go outside to reduce the possibility of cigarettes dropping into upholstery un-noticed by distracted party hosts and guests. Don't cook, especially over an open flame while tipsy.

Remember burglars can be busy during the holidays - they know all about those lovely new gadgets under the tree. Keep presents out of sight and when the boxes go to the curb, turn them inside out .

People tend to be more careless during holiday season merry-making. Some are more focused on having a good time than safety issues. Don't let that be you!

Practice prevention and enjoy peace of mind.

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Safe Home Security, East LaHave Nova Scotia

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