

Matt's Holiday Safety Tips

Shari and I are hoping your family has a warm and wonderful holiday season. Here are a few tips to help make it a safe season, as well.

Trees



-If you are using a real tree, make sure it is fresh, because a fresh tree is less of a fire hazard. To pick a fresh tree, try tapping it on the ground; if it is fresh it should not lose many needles. The needles should be hard to pull from the branches and should not break when bent. The tree should also be sticky with resin.

-When you get your tree home, cut off a few inches off the bottom of the trunk. This allows for better water absorption and will keep your tree from drying out too quickly.

-Make sure the base of the tree is steady so the tree won't tip over easily.

-Be sure to keep your tree stand filled with water.

-Think carefully about where to place your tree. It should be out of the way of traffic and be kept away from fireplaces, radiators, and heat registers.

-If you are using an artificial tree be sure to use one that is rated fire resistant and UL (Underwriters Laboratory) or FM (Factory Mutual) listed.



This will ensure that the tree has been inspected and meets specific safety standards.



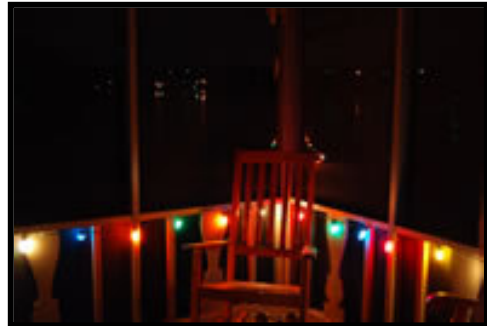
Lights



- Use only UL or FM approved sets of lights and extension cords.
- Inspect extension cords for damaged insulation or loose plugs. If these conditions exist, do not use the cord.
- If you are using an extension cord, make sure it is large enough to carry the intended load. A rule of thumb is that the

thicker the cord, the greater the load it can carry.

- Don't run cords through doorways or under rugs because this can damage the insulation.
- Never use electric lights on a metal tree because this could produce a severe shock.
- Check all tree lights before you hang them. Make sure all the lights work and that there are no frayed wires, broken sockets, or loose connections.
- Immediately replace any bulbs with broken filaments.
- Before using outdoor lights check the label to make sure they have been certified for outdoor use. Plug all outdoor decorations into circuits with ground fault circuit interrupters to avoid potential shocks.
- Turn off all lights when you leave the house or go to bed.



Ornaments / Wrappings



- Use only noncombustible or flame resistant materials to trim a tree.
- Never use a lit candle on or near a tree or other evergreen decorations.
- Remove all wrapping papers, bags, boxes, ribbons, and bows from the tree and fireplace area after the gifts have been opened.
- Do not burn wrapping papers in the fireplace. A flash fire could result since wrapping paper can ignite suddenly and burn quickly.

Fireplaces



- Have your chimney inspected by a professional prior to the start of every heating season. Creosote can build up in a chimney and can cause a chimney fire if not cleaned properly.
- Before lighting a fire, check that the flue is open.

-Always use a carbon monoxide alarm close to the site of your fireplace. It can protect your family from any carbon monoxide fumes which can result from an improperly vented fireplace.



- Always protect your family and home from burns by using a sturdy fire screen.
- Remember to burn only wood. Never burn paper or pine boughs which can float out of the chimney and ignite neighboring buildings.

Space Heaters



- Place any portable heaters or space heaters at least three feet away from any combustible surfaces.
- Never leave space heaters operating if you are not in the room or when you go to bed.
- Don't leave children or pets unattended with space heaters.
- Do not attempt to dry anything by placing it over a space heater.

Candles

-Candles should be burned for about the same amount of time in hours as the diameter of the candle is in inches. If a candle measures two inches in diameter, it should not burn for more than two hours.



- After the candle has burned for the recommended time, blow out the wick and allow the wax to cool completely before using it again.
- Candles should only be used on a heat resistant surface away from drafts, flammable fabrics and out of the reach of curious children.
- Use scissors to trim the wicks often to prevent the candles from smoking and sputtering.
- Did you know that heat and light can affect a candle's quality? Store your candles in a cool place to keep them burning brightly throughout the year.

HAVE A SAFE AND HAPPY HOLIDAY!

Matt

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