

Holiday Safety Fact Sheet



Give the gift of safety this season by following the tips below.

Christmas Tree Care

If you are using a real tree this season, buy a fresh tree, trim its base and keep the base of the trunk in water at all times. Improperly cared-for trees can quickly ignite.

Keep your real tree at least one metre away from any ignition source like a candle, space heater or fireplace. After the season is over, place it in the garbage or dispose of it through a tree mulch program.

If you use an artificial tree, ensure it is labeled flame resistant. As well, all tree decorations should be flame resistant or non-combustible.

Safe Use of Christmas Lights

Only buy Canadian Standards Association (CSA) approved lights. Before using, check to see if your lights have broken sockets, frayed or damaged wiring or loose connections. Throw out any damaged lights.

Only use indoor lights indoors and outdoor lights outdoors. Never use electric lights on a metallic tree; you may be electrocuted if you touch a tree with faulty lights. Securely fasten outdoor lights using insulated staples or specially-designed light hooks.

Follow the manufacturer's instructions on the number of light strands that can be safely connected to a single outlet.

When you leave the house or go to bed, shut off all indoor Christmas lights.

Smoke Alarm Installation and Testing

Install a CSA-approved working smoke alarm on every level of your home and outside all sleeping areas according to the manufacturer's directions.

Test your smoke alarms monthly to ensure they are working. Replace any faulty smoke alarms. Also replace any alarms that are 10 years old or older.

Home Fire Escape Planning

Plan two ways out of your home from every room so you can still leave quickly in the event one route is blocked by fire. Designate a spot outside where all family members will gather after evacuating.

Practice your home fire escape plan with all members of your household at least once a year. Provide help to younger children or older adults who may need assistance to evacuate.

Tell any guests about your home fire escape plan and ensure they know all exits in your home.

Safe Use of Extension Cords

Buy only CSA-approved extension cords. Only use an extension cord as a temporary connection.

Before using, check your cord and plug-in for damage. Throw out any faulty cords.

Cords should never be placed under rugs. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on the number of light strands it is safe to connect to a single outlet.

Fireplace and Wood Stove Safety

Have qualified professionals install and maintain your fireplace or wood stove. Inspect in and around your fireplace or stove for damage before using. If damage is present, call a qualified professional to repair.

When using a fireplace or wood stove, ensure there is a fresh air supply into your home. Use only seasoned and dry wood. Never use gasoline or other flammable liquid to start a fire.

Do not burn your Christmas tree, wrapping paper or cardboard boxes. Use a fireplace screen control sparks.

Keep flammable objects like holiday decorations, stockings, Christmas cards, etc. at least one metre away from your fireplace or wood stove. Implement a one metre “kid-free zone” to prevent accidental burns.

Never leave your fire unattended. Place spent ashes in a metal container with a lid and store outside, away from flammable materials.

Matches and Lighters

Never allow children access to matches or lighters. Keep out of reach, preferably in a high, locked cabinet.

If matches and lighters are present, keep them on your person. Closely supervise children so they do not accidentally play with the lighter or matches. Use the opportunity to teach them about fire safety.

Adults should display good fire safety behavior; use and dispose of matches and lighters in a safe manner.

Unattended Lit Candles

Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens. Do not place a lit candle in high traffic areas, near windows, blinds or curtains and in areas where children or pets could knock them over.

Use caution when carrying a lit candle. Place lit candles where they will not be knocked down. Always use a sturdy, non-flammable candle holder big enough to collect dripping wax.

Extinguish all lit candles when you leave the room, when you go to sleep or when the candle flame is within five centimetres of the holder’s edge or decorative material.

Carbon Monoxide Alarm Installation and Testing

Install carbon monoxide (CO) alarms according to manufacturer directions and test alarms monthly.

Replace any CO alarm more than seven years old.

To reduce the risk of CO exposure, ensure your natural gas appliances are properly installed, maintained and inspected by a licensed gas contractor. Ensure a fresh air supply into your home if using a fireplace or wood stove.

Also check your outside vents throughout the year to remove any snow or ice build-up.

Careless Smoking

Provide large deep ashtrays for smokers or better yet, ask smokers to smoke outside.

Spent matches and cigarette butts should be wetted before they are thrown into the garbage. Never extinguish your match or cigarette in the dirt of a potted plant since mulch in the dirt could smoulder and light.

Never smoke in bed or when tired.

Remind smokers to keep their smoking materials with them so young children do not play with them.

Fire Risks from Space Heaters

Have a one metre “kid-free zone” around your space heater to prevent accidental burns.

Be sure all controls and emergency shutoffs are in proper working condition. If not, call a qualified professional to repair.

Operate the portable space heater according to manufacturer’s directions. Always use the right kind of fuel, specified by the manufacturer for fuel-burning space heaters.

Turn off portable space heaters (and unplug if appropriate) when you leave the room or go to sleep.

Distracted Cooking

Stay in the kitchen when you are cooking. If you have to leave, turn off the stove.

Keep anything that can catch fire — oven mitts, paper towels, wooden utensils and packaging — away from your stovetop.

Have a one metre “kid-free zone” around your stove to prevent accidental burns.

If grease in a pot or pan catches fire, smother the flames by covering the pan with a lid, then turn off the heat. Never throw water on a grease fire. If you are unable to put out the fire, get everyone out of the house and call 911.