

Holiday safety

The festive season

Holidays are busy and joyous times, but holiday routines give rise to greater safety hazards than usual. Blazing fireplaces, a dry evergreen tree, faulty ornamental lights, unsafe sleepwear and candles left unattended can all pose fire hazards. Minimize the risk by following these safety tips:

Candles

Never leave burning candles unattended. Keep them out of the reach of children and away from pets, tree decorations and wrapping paper.

Cut candle wicks short to prevent high flames.

If candles are used in a centerpiece, make sure they don't burn low enough to ignite the decorations.

Use sturdy candle holders that won't easily tip over.



Holiday trees

When buying a real tree, *make sure it's fresh* (you can tell if the needles are hard to pull off). Water the tree daily and store it in a cool, sheltered area until you bring it indoors for decorating.

Make sure the tree is well-secured in a sturdy stand.

Place the tree *away from high traffic areas*, doorways, heating vents, radiators, stoves, fireplaces and burning candles.

Keep metal, sharp or breakable tree ornaments with small removable parts *away from young children.*

Dispose of the tree as soon as the holidays are over, or as soon as the needles start to fall.

Dispose of it according to local regulations—most municipalities have tree recycling programs.

Holiday lights

Only use lights that are *CSA, ULC or cUL certified*.

Use indoor lights inside and outdoor lights outside.

Check all light bulbs before you put them up. Replace broken or burned-out bulbs with those recommended by the manufacturer.

Check the light strings and extension cords you use, discarding any that are frayed or have exposed wires, loose connections or broken light sockets. Never run electrical cords through doorways or under carpets.

Don't overload electrical outlets. Use more than one outlet if the wattage of your lights is more than the outlet can handle.

Turn off all holiday lights before you go to bed or leave your home.

Fireplaces and wood stoves

Always use a secure and suitable screen in front of your fireplace, see the manufacturer's recommendation.

Have the *chimney cleaned and inspected annually*. This is to help prevent chimney fires. Some chimneys may need more frequent cleaning depending on use.

Burn seasoned hardwood: it leaves less creosote in the chimney than other woods or artificial logs.

If using fire logs, *follow the manufacturer's instructions*. Use only one log at a time.

Never burn wood that has been painted or chemically treated

Put any fire out before going to bed or leaving your home.

Make sure the chimney is drawing well so that wood smoke does not come into the room.

Keep children away from gas fireplaces. When in use, the glass doors can become hot and stay hot even after use, enough to cause serious burns.

Alarms save lives: make sure to have working Smoke alarms and Carbon Monoxide alarms in your home.

Some provinces, territories and municipalities may have specific laws or regulations around the use of fireplaces and wood stoves. Make sure you know the rules in your area.

Fast facts

Creosote is a flammable dark residue from burning wood.

Source: *Holiday Safety. Healthy Canadians, 2011. Reproduced with permission from the Minister of Health, 2011.*