

Are You Ready for a Safe Holiday?

Imagine a fire raging through your home at Christmas. As devastating as that sounds, the risk is real. According to the Alberta Office of the Fire Commissioner, fire-related deaths in Alberta homes double during the holiday season.

People spend more time indoors. Greater use of space heaters, electrical cords and candles are a few of the factors that contribute to an increase in house fires



Edmonton Fire Rescue Services encourages Edmontonians to stay safe this holiday season by following these very important [fire safety](#) reminders:

1. **Water fresh trees daily:** if you're using a real tree, buy a fresh tree and keep the base of the trunk in water at all times. Keep your tree away from any ignition source such as the fireplace, heaters or candles.
2. **Check all lights before decorating:** Before you put those lights on the tree or around the front window, check the cords closely. Discard any sets that are frayed or damaged.
3. **Make sure you have working smoke alarms:** Replace smoke alarms if they are over 10 years old. Remember that you need working smoke alarms on every storey of your home and outside all sleeping areas. Test your alarms to make sure they will alert you and your family if a fire occurs, giving you the precious seconds you need to safely escape.
4. **Make sure you have working carbon monoxide alarms:** Replace any carbon monoxide alarms over seven years old. Installing carbon monoxide alarms in your home will alert you to the presence of this deadly gas.
5. **Make sure everyone knows how to get out safely if a fire occurs:** Develop and practice a home fire escape plan with all members of the household, and make sure someone helps young children, older adults or anyone else that may need assistance to evacuate. Once outside, stay outside and call 911 from a cell phone or neighbour's house.
6. **Use extension cords wisely:** Extension cords should be used only as a temporary connection. Make sure cords never go under rugs, as this can cause damage to the cord and cause a fire.
7. **Give space heaters space:** If you are using space heaters to help take the chill off, remember to keep them at least one metre (3 feet) away from anything that can burn such as curtains, upholstery, or holiday decorations.
8. **When you go out, blow out:** Candles can set the perfect mood for a holiday celebration, but remember to always blow out candles before leaving the room or going to bed. Keep lit candles safely away from children and pets and anything that can burn, such as curtains, upholstery, or holiday decorations.
9. **Keep matches and lighters out of sight and out of reach of children:** Matches and lighters can be deadly in the hands of children. If you smoke, have only one lighter or book of matches, and keep them with you at all times.
10. **Watch what you heat:** Cooking fires most commonly occur when stoves are left unattended. Always stay in the kitchen when cooking – especially if using oil or high temperatures. If a pot catches fire, carefully slide a tight-fitting lid over the pot to smother the flames and then turn off the heat.
11. **Encourage smokers to smoke outside:** Careless smoking is the leading cause of fatal fires. If you do allow smoking indoors, use large, deep ashtrays that can't be knocked over and make sure cigarette butts are properly extinguished. Outdoor smokers are reminded to also use deep ashtrays, and make sure their cigarettes are properly extinguished.
12. **Stay safe during social gatherings:** With all the festive cheer this time of year, keep a close eye on anyone attempting to cook or smoke while under the influence of alcohol. Social occasions coupled with alcohol consumption, cooking, smoking or unattended candles can create a fire risk.

To minimize the risk at parties, plan your event in advance so you have enough time to prepare the meal. Hurried cooking activities, multi-tasking and neglecting fire safety can be ingredients for an unwanted house fire. Avoid over-crowding. Encourage guests to smoke outside and provide them with a safe ashtray. Refrain from burning candles during parties, as they can easily be knocked over or ignite nearby combustibles unnoticed.

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