

## Special Holiday Safety Issues

by [John Demas](#) on 12/23/10

Most Americans enjoy celebrating the winter holidays and decorate their homes accordingly. Whether you prefer special candles, trees, baked goods or wrapped presents, you need to keep safety issues in mind when planning each event.

Before noting some of this season's special dangers, our firm wants to remind you to be sure all of the following items are working properly in your home:

- **Fire alarms and carbon dioxide detectors;**
- **Kitchen stoves, ranges and fire extinguishers;**
- **Fireplaces and space heaters.** *(It's always best to have these serviced by professionals before using them again each fall and winter.) Be sure to always keep a fire screen in front of the fireplace – you never know when some small embers may still be burning. Also, carefully read and obey the list of safety precautions that came with your space heater—look online if you've lost them.*

### Christmas Trees

Every year, far too many fire engines must rush to people's homes to put out Christmas tree fires. Here are some safety guidelines for keeping a tree up during the holidays:

- Keep your tree properly watered. Check the tree stand at least once a day. When a tree starts drying out, it becomes an even bigger fire hazard;
- Never erect a Christmas tree too close to curtains, a fireplace or a doorway;
- Don't overload your tree with too many lights and avoid using any extension cords that can easily cause people to trip — and possibly pull your tree down;
- Never allow the tree lights to rest on wrapped packages below;

- Never even consider placing lit candles in holders on your tree – even if just for a short amount of time. The dangers just aren't worth it;
- Keep pets and small children away from your tree. It's too easy for them to tip the tree over and cause a fire;
- Never leave decorative lights on when you're not going to be home. Seriously consider turning all outdoor seasonal lights off when you turn in for the night.
- Properly dispose of your tree at the end of the season. Never leave a dried out tree in your home or lying by the side of it. Check with your city or county to find out how you can legally dispose of your tree.

## Candles and Special Oil Lamps

Although candles can be quite meaningful, beautiful and sweet smelling, they should never be lit when an adult isn't home. Keep children and pets away from lit candles, only allowing children to be near them during special events when adults are nearby.

Never place lit candles near curtains, coat racks or doorways. Keep all matches away from small children and others who might misuse them. While scented oil lamps are beautiful and smell wonderful, they must be carefully watched to minimize fire dangers.

## Other General Decorations

Carefully check every holiday decoration's plug or cord. Never plug in and use any cords that appear to be frayed or worn out. Try to avoid using any extension cords since someone is likely to trip over them and fall. Make sure you don't overload any wall sockets.

If you're going to place decorations in your windows, on top of your roof or out in your front lawn, be sure to fully comply with your city's governing ordinances. Never leave such lights on over night. Should there be a "short" in any wiring or plug, your home could catch fire so quickly that no one could arrive in time to save it.

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