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 **Make Your Holiday Season Happy and Safe!**

There’s nothing like the smell of a freshly cut Christmas tree, scented candles burning on the mantle, a yuletide log burning in the fireplace, and festive holiday lights strung about the house. While these decorations do much to enhance the season, proper usage and some safety precautions can ensure your holiday season is both happy and safe!

Although live Christmas tree fires are not common, they do pose a serious risk. Taking some simple steps can ensure the safety of your home and family. Before you set up your tree, cut a few inches off the bottom of the trunk. This will help the tree soak up water and keep it fresh longer. When you place the tree in your home, make sure it is not blocking any exits. Once it’s set up, make sure to fill the tree stand with water, and check it every day! Newly cut trees need a lot of water! Make it a habit to check the tree at the same time every day to help you remember. Also, make sure to keep the tree at least three feet away from heat sources such as fireplaces, radiators, space heaters, candles or heat vents. Once the holidays are over, be sure to take down your tree in a timely manner! Once you see needles starting to fall, it’s time to disassemble the tree and discard it. Never leave a dry tree standing in your home.

The lights you use to decorate both the tree and your home should be UL listed. Look for the UL tag on the box before you buy. Any frayed or damaged light strings should be thrown away. Make sure to read manufacturer’s directions when connecting your lights. Do not string too many sets together, as this can cause an overload that may spark a fire. The same goes for extension cords! Look for that UL tag and resist stringing too many together.

The top four days for home candle fires are Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year’s Eve and New Year’s Day. While lovely to look at, an unattended candle can soon turn deadly. Keep candles at least 12 inches away from anything that burns. Be sure to make it a ritual to go about your home and extinguish each candle before leaving the house or going to bed at night.

Your fireplace will be used throughout the colder months to warm the house and provide ambience. Before using your fireplace, please be sure it is thoroughly cleaned of old soot. This includes the chimney. Having a professional chimney sweep clean your chimney is a wise investment and will help to avoid a fire. Fireplaces or chimneys are involved in one out of three home heating fires.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) gives the following advice for avoiding a fireplace or chimney fire:

* Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from a fireplace, wood stove, or any other heating equipment
* Create a three-foot “kid-free zone” around open fires
* Make sure the fireplace has a sturdy screen to stop sparks from flying into the room
* Never leave a fireplace fire unattended, particularly when children are present
* Ashes should be cool before putting them in a metal container, and kept at a safe distance from your home.

And finally, make sure you have working, properly installed smoke alarms in your home.

These few simple tips can ensure your holidays are happy and your home and loved ones are safe. For more information about home heating safety, NFPA has a tip sheet that can be downloaded at <http://bit.ly/nfpaheatingsafety>. For more holiday safety tips from NFPA, visit <http://bit.ly/nfpaholidaysafety>. Through both links, you will find downloadable pdfs that you can save and share.

Happy holidays to all!

**Insert your Department name** relies on brave men and women to volunteer their time to serve as volunteer firefighters to ensure that every call for help is answered. Men and women with almost every skill set are needed. To learn more about volunteer opportunities, please contact **Insert your Department name at Insert website** or call **Insert your Dept. phone number**.

There are volunteer opportunities at your local volunteer fire department for citizens willing to work hard. To learn more about becoming a volunteer firefighter and joining your local volunteer fire department, please visit [www.VolunteerFireTN.org](http://www.VolunteerFireTN.org).

***About the Tennessee Fire Chiefs Association, Inc. (TFCA)****The TFCA provides leadership to career and volunteer Fire Chiefs, Chief Fire Officers and managers of emergency service organizations throughout the State of Tennessee through vision, information, education, service and representation to enhance their knowledge, skills, and abilities. The TN Fire Chiefs Association (TFCA) also encourages the professional advancement of the fire service to ensure and maintain greater protection of life and property from fire and natural or man-made disasters. The TFCA’s mission is to provide leadership to career and volunteer chiefs, chief fire officers, and managers of Emergency Service Organizations throughout the State of Tennessee through vision, information, education, service and representation to enhance their professionalism and capabilities. More information about the TFCA is located at* [*www.tnfirechiefs.com*](http://www.tnfirechiefs.com) *.*

***About Volunteer Workforce Solutions (VWS)****The Tennessee Fire Chiefs Association was awarded a SAFER recruitment and retention grant in 2016 and partnered with the* [International Association of Fire Chiefs](https://www.iafc.org/about-iafc/positions/position/home-smoke-alarms) *to identify recruitment and retention goals, strategies and marketing methodologies that would benefit not only participating departments, but all fire departments in the state. 19 departmental groups, consisting of 64 departments, were selected to participate in Phase I of the program. The VWS program is also operating in Virginia through the Virginia Fire Chiefs Association and Connecticut through the Connecticut Fire Chiefs Association. There is also currently a National VWS effort focusing on diversity and new trainings. More information about the Tennessee VWS can be found at* [*www.VolunteerFireTN.org*](http://www.VolunteerFireTN.org)*.*

*(Insert info about your department in similar format to above)*