

Portage Prepares

Helping Portage County Citizens prepare for emergencies and disasters.



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Winter Fire Safety Tips

Winter time is holiday time - and that means lots of cooking, lots of entertaining, and unfortunately, lots of opportunities for home fires to occur. The Division of State Fire Marshal urges Ohio families to pay particular attention to fire safety during the holiday season. During last year's holiday season (November 2011 - January 2012) in Ohio, 38 people died in 4,306 residential fires. These same fires also produced \$42 million in losses.

By the end of 2011, 125 Ohioans died in residential fires. As of October 16, 2012, 78 Ohioans have died in fires.

During the Christmas and holiday season, electrical fires are one of the leading causes of home and Christmas tree fires. Use electricity safety to avoid the following common causes of electrical fires:

- Overloaded outlets
- Misuse of extension cords
- Not turning off lights and decorations before going to bed or leaving the home
- Old or worn holiday lights
- Old or worn out appliances and electrical cords

Decoration Fire Safety Tips

Trees

- When purchasing an artificial tree, look for a "Fire Resistant" label.
- If you have a metallic tree, never use electric lights on it. You could be electrocuted.
- When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness. Make sure the needles are soft and are not falling off. Hard, brittle needles are signs of a dry tree, which can easily catch fire.
- Live trees need water, and lots of it. Cut about one inch off the bottom of the trunk before putting the tree in the stand. Add water and check the tree daily.
- Do not block your exit door with your tree.
- Remove live trees from your home as soon as possible. Most Christmas tree fires occur on or after New Year's Day.



Lights

- Check each light set for damaged sockets or wires. Discard light sets and extension cords that are worn or cracked.
- Use UL approved light sets. Follow the manufacturer recommendations concerning the maximum number of light sets that can be connected together.
- Replace burnt out bulbs with bulbs of the same wattage as indicated on the tag attached to the light set.
- Turn off all lights before you go to bed or leave the home.
- Use only light sets and extension cords marked "For Outdoor Use" outside your home.
- Fasten outdoor lights securely with insulated clips or hooks. Use circuits protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs).

General Fire Safety

One of the best ways to protect yourself and your family from a house fire is by having working smoke detectors in your home. By providing early warning of fire, smoke detectors can double your chances of escaping a fire safely. Annually, there are about 15,300 fires in the place we feel safest - our homes. Fire data shows that over the past three years, on average, nearly 75 percent of the people who died each year in Ohio residential fires did not have a working smoke detector in their home. Follow these tips to keep you, your family and your belongings safe from fire:



- Check your smoke detectors monthly. Only a working smoke detector can save your life.
- Replace the batteries in your smoke detectors twice a year. When you change your clocks for Daylight Savings, change your batteries.
- Install smoke detectors on each level of your home and sleeping areas. Sleep with your bedroom door closed.
- Make sure overnight guests also know your fire escape plan.
- Install a carbon monoxide detector if you have any appliance or device that has a flame - stove, water heater, furnace, fireplace, space heater, etc.



Cooking Safety Tips



- Cooking-related fires are the No. 1 cause of fires in the home.
- Do not leave cooking food unattended. If you must leave, turn off all cooking appliances.
- Keep combustible materials such as towels, potholders, papers, etc., away from heat sources on the stove or oven. Don't wear loose fitting clothing while cooking.
- Do not attempt to move a pan of grease that is on fire. Put a lid on the pan to smother the fire, then turn off the heat, or use an ABC-rated fire extinguisher. Alert your family so they can evacuate safely.
- Be sure to turn pot handles towards the back of the stove. Small children are generally curious and may reach for a handle to see what is in the pot. They could get burned.
- Keep pets off cooking surfaces and countertops to prevent them from knocking things onto the burner.

In Case of Fire, Follow Your Escape Plan

Remember to GET OUT, STAY OUT and CALL 911 or your local emergency phone number.

- If closed doors or handles are warm, use your second way out. Never open doors that are warm to the touch.
- Crawl low under smoke.
- Go to your outside meeting place and then call for help.
- If smoke, heat or flames block your exit routes, stay in the room with the doors closed. Place a wet towel under the door and call the fire department or 911. Open a window and wave a brightly colored cloth or flashlight to signal for help.



Use Caution With Fire Extinguishers

Remember!



Use a portable fire extinguisher only if you've been trained by the fire department and in the following conditions:

- The fire is confined to a small area and is not growing.
- The room is not filled with smoke.
- Everyone else has exited the building.
- The fire department has been called.
- Remember the word PASS when using a fire extinguisher:
 - Pull the pin and hold the extinguisher with the nozzle pointing away from you.
 - Aim low. Point the extinguisher at the base of the fire.
 - Squeeze the lever slowly and evenly.
 - Sweep the nozzle from side to side.