



City of Charlottesville

Fire Department
203 Ridge Street
Charlottesville, VA 22902



Media Release

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For Immediate Release

Charlottesville Fire Department Holiday Safety Messages

The Charlottesville Fire Department would like to remind you that the holidays are approaching rapidly and this means that decorations, Christmas trees, lights, and candles will all be in frequent use. The Charlottesville Fire Department would like everyone to have a happy and safe holiday season, and to that end would like to share the following safety tips:

Christmas Trees

Regularly check your tree for fresh, green needles. Trees that have dried out over several weeks' burn faster than fresher, well-watered trees. Remember to keep your tree watered at all times.

Make sure your tree stand holds at least 1 gallon of water. As a general rule, stands should provide 1 quart of water per inch of trunk diameter. The average 6-foot tree has a 4-inch diameter trunk and can consume as much as 4 quarts or 1 gallon of water per day.

Keep your tree at least 3 feet from fireplaces, radiators, space heaters, heating vents and other sources of heat. Don't place the tree where it blocks an exit.

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When purchasing an artificial tree, look for the label "Fire Resistant." Although this label does not mean the tree won't catch fire, it does indicate the tree will resist burning and should extinguish quickly.

Lighting

Look for the UL Mark on light strings, electrical decorations and extension cords. The UL Mark means that UL engineers have tested representative samples of the product for foreseeable safety hazards such as fire and electric shock.

Ensure outside lights, decorations and extension cords are rated for outside use. Lights intended for indoor-only use bear green holographic UL Marks. Light strings intended for indoor and outdoor use bear red holographic UL Marks.

Carefully inspect each electrical decoration — new or old — before plugging it in. Cracked sockets, frayed, bare or loose wires can cause a serious electric shock or start a fire. Replace damaged items with new, UL-Listed decorations.

Don't use staples or nails to hang light strings. Instead, purchase plastic hooks or clips designed for hanging light strings.

Check packaging to determine the maximum number of strings that may be connected or use this rule of thumb: Connect a maximum of three midjet (push-in bulbs) light strings or up to 50 bulbs of light strings with the screw-in bulbs (C7s and C9s).

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Don't overload extension cords by plugging in too many decorations.

Turn off all electrical lights and decorations before leaving home or going to bed.

Candles

Keep candles away from combustible materials, such as decorations, paper, wreaths and boughs.

Place candles away from places that could be knocked over by a person or pet.

Use sturdy, non-combustible candleholders that can collect dripping wax and won't tip over.

Extinguish a candle when 2 inches of wax remains or a half-inch if the candle is in a container.

This prevents heat damage to the surface and stops glass containers from breaking.

Always keep candles, as well as matches and lighters, out of the reach of children, and don't leave children unattended in a room with lit candles.

Never use lit candles to decorate Christmas trees.

Extinguish candles when leaving the room or going to sleep.

Ladders

Never exceed the ladder's weight limit or the maximum load rating. Use wooden or fiberglass ladders when near power lines and electrical wiring. Metal ladders conduct electricity.

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Use the right ladder for the job, ensuring it extends 3 feet over the roofline or working surface.

Set the ladder on a firm, level surface and avoid soft or muddy ground.

Never stand on a step ladder's bucket shelf. Read and follow the warning stickers for highest standing levels.

Have no more than one person on the ladder at a time.

Don't carry equipment while climbing. Wear a tool belt or have someone hand equipment to you.

Always check for overhead power lines or obstructions when placing ladders.

Face the ladder when climbing up or down, keeping your body centered between the side rails.

Fireplaces

Do not burn wrapping paper in the fireplace. A flash fire may result as wrapping paper can ignite suddenly and burn intensely.

Do not place flammable decorations on mantles or close to fireplaces. They will get hot and may ignite.

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Kitchen Safety

During the Holidays, there will be numerous occasions for big meals. This also means the potential for kitchen fires. To reduce your risk of a kitchen fire, follow these steps:

Never leave food unattended on the stovetop - turn off burners or set a timer if you leave the room for any reason.

Heat cooking oil slowly and never leave it unattended. Turn down the heat if it begins to smoke.

Keep combustibles away from the stovetop and keep your cooking area clean. If you experience a stovetop fire and the fire is large or appears to be growing, do not attempt to extinguish it.

Quickly leave your home and call 911 from a cell phone or a neighbor's house. However, if the fire is still in the pan or oven and has not spread to nearby counters or cabinets, you may be able to extinguish it yourself through one of the following methods:

To extinguish a pan or oven fire

Put a lid on it. The easiest way to extinguish a small pan fire is with a lid. Turn off the burner and from the side carefully slide a pan lid over the pan. The lid will smother the fire, while turning off the burner removes the heat. Do not move the pan until the fire is completely extinguished and the pan is cool. If you do not have a pan lid, you may also use a baking sheet or pizza pan.

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If the fire is still contained in the pan, you may use baking soda. Sprinkle a generous amount in the palm of your hand and toss upon the fire.

If the fire is not extinguished after several attempts, use a fire extinguisher or leave your home and call 911. Use a fire extinguisher only if the fire is small and has not spread outside the pan. The discharge of a portable fire extinguisher takes just a few seconds.

If the fire is contained to an oven or microwave, keep the door closed to contain the fire. Remember to NEVER transfer a burning pan from the stovetop to the sink or out a back door. The fire may grow in size and burn you or spread to the cabinets or countertops. The flames will splash, causing the fire to spread and could possibly cause serious injuries.

For more information, call the Charlottesville Fire Department at 434-970-3240, or visit us on the web at www.cfdonline.org or Facebook. The Charlottesville Fire Department wishes you and yours a happy and safe holiday season.

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