

Be safe from fires over the holidays

The holiday season is a festive and joyous occasion to spend time with friends and family.

But before sitting down to your holiday feast, learn how to keep your family safe this holiday season.

As part of the Holiday Fire Safety campaign, the Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management offers simple tips to enjoy a fire-safe holiday season.

- ? Stay in the kitchen while cooking, especially if using oil or high temperatures. If a pot catches fire, cover the pot with a lid to smother the flames and turn off the heat.
- ? Install and test smoke alarms on every storey and outside all sleeping areas of your home. Don't forget about carbon monoxide alarms if you have a fuel-burning appliance or attached garage.
- ? Before you put lights on your tree or around windows, check the cords closely. Discard any sets that are frayed or damaged.
- ? Keep lit candles away from children, pets and things that are flammable, such as curtains, upholstery, or holiday decorations. Blow out candles before leaving the room or going to bed.
- ? Never burn gift wrappings, boxes, cartons or other types of packing in the fireplace or hang Christmas stockings from the mantel when the fireplace is in use.
- ? Water fresh Christmas trees daily and keep them away from fireplaces, heaters or candles.
- ? Do not overload extension cords. Make sure cords are never placed under rugs or furniture.
- ? Make sure everyone knows how to get out of your home safely if a fire occurs. Develop and practise a home escape plan with family and holiday guests.
- ? In case of fire, call the fire department from outside the home, from a cellphone or neighbour's home.

Last December, there were 72 injuries and nine fatalities due to residential fires in Ontario. The top five causes of fires in December are from cooking, heating equipment, electrical distribution equipment, cigarettes and appliances.

Almost one in four residential fires are a result of cooking, most often due to leaving cooking unattended.

?We're all dreaming of a fire-free holiday season,? Ontario Fire Marshal and Chief of Emergency Management Ross Nichols commented. ?But we must all do our part to reduce the risks of fire. Make sure you have working smoke and carbon monoxide alarms outside of all sleeping areas in the home to ensure you and your family have a safe and happy holiday.?