



# Holiday Fire Safety Kit



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For more Manitoba information and relevant statistics go to  
[www.firecomm.gov.mb.ca](http://www.firecomm.gov.mb.ca)

# Home Fire Safety Tips for the Holidays

## The Kitchen

Cooking is the number one cause of home fires in Manitoba, and cooking oil and fat fires account for many of these. Be extra careful when doing this kind of cooking. The best way to fry foods is to use an electric-temperature-controlled skillet or a deep-fat fryer. Here's what to do if cooking oil or fat in a pot or pan catches fire:



- Turn the heat off immediately.
- Smother the flames by covering the pan with a lid.
- Use baking soda (flour can be explosive) on shallow grease fires.
- Never turn on the overhead fan, as this could spread the fire.
- Never throw water on a grease fire, as an explosive fire-ball could fill the kitchen.

A stovetop fire can start in a flash, so stay in the kitchen when something is cooking on the stove. Keep all combustible items a safe distance from the stove, including tea towels, wooden or plastic spoons, and paper towels.

## Smoking

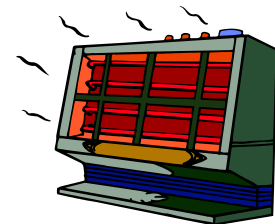
Fires caused by smoking can be deadly. To prevent smoking fires:

- Encourage smokers to go outside. Never smoke in bed.
- Discourage smokers from discarding cigarette butts in planters, pots or dry leaves in the yard. Dry peat moss in pots can ignite and start a fire.
- Keep large, deep ashtrays on hand that will reduce the risk of ashes and cigarette butts falling onto rugs or upholstery.
- Allow ashes to cool completely before disposing of them.
- After parties, check around and under sofa and chair cushions for smouldering cigarettes.

## Space Heaters

We often use space heaters to supplement the central heating system in our homes. To prevent heating fires:

- Keep space heaters at least 1m (3 feet) from anything that can burn, such as paper, bedding, furniture and curtains.
- Turn off all space heaters before going to bed or going out.



## Fireplaces

- Never burn gift wrapping, boxes, cartons, or other types of packaging in the fireplace. They burn too rapidly and generate too much heat.
- Don't hang Christmas stockings from the mantel when the fireplace is in use.
- Always use a screen in front of the fireplace to protect against flying sparks.
- Never use gasoline or any other flammable liquid to start a fire.
- Use only small quantities of seasoned and dried wood.
- Never leave the fire unattended or let it smoulder.
- Remove ashes regularly.
- Place the ashes in a metal container and store outside away from flammable materials.
- Don't use Christmas trees for firewood.



## Candles

- Never leave burning candles unattended.
- Place candles away from absolutely anything that can catch fire.
- Use tea lights or votive candles in non-combustible containers as they are generally safer than tapers.
- Burn candles only under the supervision of a responsible adult.
- Place candles where they will not be knocked down and put them in sturdy holders on a stable surface, well away from drafts, curtains, children and pets.
- Snuff out candles before leaving the room or going to sleep.
- Never put lit candles on a tree.



## Electrical Outlets

There is often a tendency to overload wall outlets during the holiday season and it is a fire hazard. Overloading electrical outlets is unsafe and should be avoided, even for short durations.

- Inspect all cords before using; make sure they are CSA certified. Read the labels and manufacturer's instructions to ensure proper use.
- Look for loose connections or frayed/exposed wires. Discard any defective cords.
- Insert plugs fully into outlets. Poor contact may cause overheating or shock.

- Do not coil or bunch extension cords that are in use, and do not run them under carpets or rugs.
- Never use indoor extension cords outside.
- Keep outdoor electrical connectors above ground and out of puddles and snow.
- Be careful when placing cords behind or beneath furniture; pinched cords can cause them to fray and even short out.

## Christmas Trees

Special fire safety precautions need to be taken when keeping a real tree in the house. A burning tree can rapidly fill a room with fire and deadly gases.



- Get a freshly cut tree. It will stay green longer and be less of a fire hazard. Pick a tree with a strong green colour and a noticeable fragrance.
- Always test for freshness before buying. A tree with high moisture content is safer. Very few needles should fall when the butt of the tree is tapped on the ground; needles should bend, not break; and the trunk should be sticky to the touch with resin.
- Cut the bottom of the tree two to four centimetres diagonally to help absorb water.
- Place the tree in a stand that will hold two to three litres of water and top it up daily. Check the water level daily to ensure the tree is always immersed in water. If the water level drops below the trunk, the stem may re-seal itself, requiring a fresh cut.
- To clean the tree stand and improve the tree's water intake, use one capful of bleach to a cup of water.
- Use a tree stand that has widespread legs for better balance.
- Shorts in electrical lights or open flames from candles, lighters or matches can start Christmas tree fires.
- Place your tree away from heat sources such as a fireplace, television, a sunny window or heat vent. The heat will dry out the tree more rapidly, making it more easily ignited by heat, flame or sparks.
- The tree should not block doors or windows.
- Never use candles on a tree.
- A live tree can be used for a period of up to 2 weeks. After that, even the freshest tree can start to dry out.
- When the tree becomes dry, discard it promptly. The best way to dispose of your tree is by taking it to a recycling centre or having it taken away by a community pick-up service.
- Never put tree branches or needles in a fireplace or wood-burning stove.
- Do not go near a Christmas tree with an open flame.
- Consider an artificial tree (they are much safer and cleaner). If you are using a metallic or artificial tree, make sure it is flame retardant.

## Decorations

- Choose decorations that are flame-retardant, non-combustible and non-conductive.
- If you have young children or pets, avoid very small decorations.
- Do not use metallic ornaments on the tree. If they make contact with defective wiring, they could become a shock hazard.
- Recycle wrapping paper and never put wrapping paper in a fireplace.



## Lights - Holiday Strings and Sets

- Use approved light sets that bear an approval marking authorized by a certification organization that is recognized by the Province of Manitoba such as CSA, ULC, CUL, etc.
- Use the proper lights for the environment. Indoor lights should not be used outdoors because they lack weatherproof connections. Some outdoor lights burn too hot indoors.
- Inspect lights before use. Check for cracked bulbs and for frayed, broken or exposed wires, and discard if faulty.
- Do not use electric lights on metallic trees. A faulty system could energize the tree and shock or electrocute anyone who comes into contact. Illuminate metallic trees with coloured floodlights placed at a safe distance from the tree.
- Read the manufacturer's instructions for the maximum number of light strands to be connected.
- Periodically check the light string wires; they should not be warm to touch.
- Before replacing a bulb on your light strings, check the original package for the proper wattage and voltage.
- Make sure outdoor circuits are equipped with an approved, weather-proof ground fault circuit interrupter.
- Ensure circuit breakers and fuses on your holiday light circuit are no larger than 15 amperes.
- Don't overload electrical circuits. Have no more than 1400 watts on a circuit. Your circuit is overloaded if other lights in the house dim when the holiday lighting is turned on or the plug is very hot when unplugged.
- To figure out a circuit's load, multiply the number of bulbs by the watts per bulb, plus any lamps, appliances or other equipment on the same circuit.
- LED (light-emitting diode) strings are available for sale through many Canadian retailers. These energy-efficient light strings produce very little heat and reduce

the risk of fire. However, there is the potential for shock or fire hazard as with any other electrical device.

- LED lights should have an approval label attached to the light string such as a red tag stating an approval file number.
- Turn off all tree and display lights before retiring for the night or before leaving the house.

## Social Gatherings

Social occasions coupled with alcohol consumption, cooking, smoking or unattended candles can create a fire risk. To minimize the risk at parties:

- Plan your event in advance, and allow enough time to prepare the meal. Hurried cooking activities, multi-tasking and neglecting fire safety can be ingredients for an unwanted house fire.
- Avoid overcrowding.
- Encourage guests to smoke outside and provide them with a safe ashtray.
- Refrain from burning candles during parties. They can be easily knocked over or light nearby combustibles, unnoticed.

## Smoke Alarms and Fire Escape Planning

Smoke alarms provide early warning of smoke and fire danger to allow safe escape from fires. Follow these tips to ensure your smoke alarms are in working order:



- Smoke alarms must have a source of electricity, either from household current or from batteries. Batteries should never be removed for other uses or to stop false alarms.
- Smoke alarms can fail with age. To make sure that they are in working condition, they must be tested every month by pushing the test button.
- At least one smoke alarm must be installed on every level of your home, outside sleeping areas. Most fire deaths happen during sleeping hours, and a smoke alarm outside the bedrooms can alert you to escape. A smoke alarm inside the bedroom will provide additional protection.

When the smoke alarm sounds, everyone must know what to do and where to go. Develop a fire escape plan, keeping the following in mind:

- Know two ways out of every room. The first way out would be the door and the alternate escape could be a window that can be exited safely.
- Make sure all designated escape routes are accessible and free of clutter.

- Leave the building as quickly as possible. Once outside, do not re-enter the building for any reason.
- Call 9-1-1 or local emergency number from outside the building using a cell phone or neighbour's phone.

## Power Outages

Safety issues can arise during an extended power outage. These are most commonly due to the improper use of candles and generators. Please follow the tips below to ensure safety while the utility service is being restored.

- Use battery-powered flashlights or lanterns. This will greatly reduce your risk of a home fire while you are without power. Using candles for emergency lighting can be hazardous. Many fires have started from safety lapses while using candles.
- Many homeowners have smoke alarms powered by household electricity. During power outages, make sure you have a working battery-powered smoke alarm to protect your family. Smoke alarms provide your family with the critical early warning to escape a home fire.
- If you are using a generator as a backup power source, always place the generator outside. If the generator is inside your home, fatal levels of carbon monoxide exhaust can accumulate and endanger your family.

## Fire Safety Gift Suggestions

- Home smoke alarm
- Battery-powered fire-safe candles
- Carbon monoxide detector
- Multi-purpose (ABC) fire extinguisher
- Thermostatically controlled deep fryer or skillet
- First-aid kit
- Flashlight and batteries
- Fire escape ladders for second-floor bedrooms
- Window guards, especially good for people living in high-rise apartments
- Child locks, baby gates and outlet covers
- Night lights
- Candle snuffer
- "Emergency kit" including energy bars, water, battery radio, flashlight and a first-aid kit packed in a small travel bag.



## Carbon Monoxide

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colourless, odourless, poisonous gas found in fumes from car exhaust, furnaces, water heaters, fireplaces, and appliances or equipment that burn solid (wood, charcoal), liquid (gasoline, oil) or gaseous (propane, natural gas) fuels. No fuel burns 100 percent. It is the incomplete burning of fuels that produces carbon monoxide.



For more information on Carbon Monoxide safety for homes and small buildings please go to:

[https://www.hydro.mb.ca/safety/natural\\_gas/carbon\\_monoxide.shtml](https://www.hydro.mb.ca/safety/natural_gas/carbon_monoxide.shtml)

<http://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/By-topic/Fire-and-life-safety-equipment/Carbon-monoxide>

For more information and printables (like the one below) on holiday safety visit: <http://www.nfpa.org/holiday>



Winter holidays are a time for families and friends to get together. But that also means a greater risk for fire. Following a few simple tips will ensure a happy and fire-safe holiday season.

#### HOLIDAY DECORATING

- Be careful with holiday decorations. Choose decorations that are flame resistant or flame retardant.
- Keep lit candles away from decorations and other things that can burn.
- Some lights are only for indoor or outdoor use, but not both.
- Replace any string of lights with worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections. Read manufacturer's instructions for number of light strands to connect.
- Use clips, not nails, to hang lights so the cords do not get damaged.
- Keep decorations away from windows and doors.



#### HOLIDAY ENTERTAINING

- Test your smoke alarms and tell guests about your home fire escape plan.
- Keep children and pets away from lit candles.
- Keep matches and lighters up high in a locked cabinet.
- Stay in the kitchen when cooking on the stovetop.
- Ask smokers to smoke outside. Remind smokers to keep their smoking materials with them so young children do not touch them.
- Provide large, deep ashtrays for smokers. Wet cigarette butts with water before discarding.



### Before Heading Out or to Bed

**Blow out** lit candles when you leave the room or go to bed. **Turn off** all light strings and decorations before leaving home or going to bed.

#### FACTS

- ! More than **one-third** of home decoration fires are started by candles.
- ! More than **two of every five** decoration fires happen because decorations are placed too close to a heat source.



**NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION**  
The leading information and knowledge resource on fire, electrical and related hazards

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