

The South Elgin & Countryside Fire Protection District wishes each of you a happy and safe holiday season!

Here are some fire safety hints to keep your house fire safe this holiday season:

TREES: Artificial trees (plastic) should bear a listing label. Some unlabeled plastic trees burn with extreme vigor. Do not rely on chemical coatings or sprays to make your live evergreen flame resistant. Follow these safety rules when shopping for a natural tree:

A fresh tree will stay green longer and be less of a fire hazard than a dry tree. To check for freshness, remember, check for color and scent. Feel the needles; they shouldn't come off in your hand. A fresh tree is deep green in color and has a strong scent of pine. The trunk butt of a fresh tree should be sticky with sap. After you get the tree home, cut a half-inch off the trunk and **keep plenty of water in the stand.**

Place your Christmas tree in a location away from fireplaces, radiators and other heat sources. Be sure that it is out of the traffic pattern and primary evacuation route in case of an emergency.

CANDLES: The use of candles during the Holiday Season has increased drastically over the years. When using candles, always make sure that the candles are not close to combustible materials, such as curtains and other decorations. Make sure all of the candles are snuffed out before retiring or leaving your house. Never leave a candle unattended!

FIREPLACES: Your fireplace is a source of warmth and heat. Before starting your fire, be sure to remove all paper and wood decorations from the immediate area. **BE SURE THE FLUE IS OPEN.** Use a grate to burn materials on, in the fireplace. Avoid prolonged over-firing, this may ignite the structure through overheated hearth or fireplace walls where the mortar has become dried and dropped out because of excessive heat. Never use flammable liquids to light the fire, always keep the fire box area clean of ashes and embers, and make sure they are completely cooled before taking the ashes or embers into a storage area. Avoid burning garbage, dried decorations, wrapping paper, etc., in fireplaces as these burn with a very hot flame and may ignite accumulated creosote or cause damage to the chimney itself. It is also extremely important to have your chimney cleaned by a certified chimney sweep. The NFPA recommends that chimneys, fireplaces, and vents shall be inspected at least once a year for soundness, freedom from deposits, and correct clearances. Cleaning, maintenance, and repairs should be done when necessary.

LIGHTS: Christmas tree lights and other decorations set the theme for the Holidays. Here are some important points to remember when using them. Use only lights that have been tested for safety. Identify these by a label from a listing agency, such as UL. Check the labels on lights to be used outdoors to see that they are suitable for outdoor use. Never use indoor lights outside. Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, walls or other firm support to protect them from wind damage. Never use more than the listed amount of light sets per extension cord. Read the manufacturer's instructions carefully, and do not use more than the number of light sets recommended in one circuit. Always turn off lights when you retire for the evening or leave your home. A short circuit in any electrical equipment could cause a fire. Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. All lights present the problem of shock and a casualty hazards for curious kids.

TURKEY FRYERS: The OSFM, in accordance with the U.S. Consumer Safety Commission, recommends consumers who prefer the method of turkey fryers to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Keep fryer in FULL VIEW while burner is on.
- Place fryer in an open area AWAY from all walls, fences, or other structures.
- Never use IN, ON, or UNDER a garage, breezeway, carport, porch, or any structure that can catch fire.
- Completely thaw (USDA says 24 hours for every 4 to 5 pounds) and dry turkey before cooking. Wet turkeys can produce excessive hot oil splatter when added to the oil.
- Raise and lower food SLOWLY to reduce splatter and avoid burns.
- COVER bare skin when adding or removing food.
- Check the oil temperature frequently.
- If oil begins to smoke, immediately turn gas supply OFF.
- If a fire occurs, immediately call 911. DO NOT attempt to extinguish fire with water. Take sure there is at least 2 feet of space between the liquid propane tank and fryer burner.
- Place the liquid propane gas tank and fryer so that any wind blows the heat of the fryer away from the gas tank.
- Center the pot over the burner on the cooker.

Please feel free to contact the South Elgin Fire Protection District with any questions or concerns on how to stay fire safe during the holiday season!