



## Barry-Eaton District Health Department

Be Active • Be Safe • Be Healthy

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### Keeping Safe this Holiday Season

The winter holiday season is traditionally a festive time of year with lots of celebrations and family gatherings. Statistics show, however, that the incidents of home fires and electrical accidents also typically increase during the winter holiday season. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), 30 percent of home fire and 38 percent of home fire deaths occur during the months of December, January, and February. This holiday season, the Barry-Eaton District Health Department reminds you to take precautions to protect yourself and your loved ones from home fires.

Winter fires come from a variety of sources. According to the United States Fire Administration (USFA), fires caused by cooking, heating, and open flame all increase during the winter holiday period. They also tend to be more severe than the average fire during the year across all loss measures. Holiday decoration and Christmas tree fires, in particular, are considerably more damaging than other fires. These fires result in twice the injuries and five times the fatalities per fire as the average winter home fire. Each year, around 260 fires begin with Christmas trees, resulting in 12 deaths, 24 injuries and \$16.4 million in property damage. Another 150 home fires are caused by decorative and holiday lights.

Follow these seasonal safety tips from the National Safety Council and Consumer Product Safety Commission to prevent home fires this winter:

- When buying a live tree, check for freshness. A fresh tree is green, its needles are hard to pull from branches, and they don't break when bent between your fingers. Water the tree regularly.
- When buying an artificial tree, look for the label: "Fire Resistant." Although this label does not mean that the tree will not catch fire, the label does indicate that the tree is more resistant to catching fire.
- Decorate the tree with your kids in mind; move ornaments that are breakable or have metal hooks toward the top.
- Select lights tested for safety by a nationally recognized testing laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL), Intertek (ETL) or the Canadian Standards Association (CSA). Throw out damaged sets with exposed or frayed wire, loose connections or broken sockets and do not use electric lights on a metallic tree.
- Always use the proper step ladder; don't stand on chairs or other furniture.
- Make sure paths are clear so no one trips on decorations, toys, extension cords, etc.
- Make sure candles are on stable surfaces, never leave them unattended or sleep in a room with a lit candle; do not burn near trees, curtains or any flammable items, and keep out of reach of children. December is the peak time of year for candle fires.
- Check and clean the chimney and fireplace area at least once a year, and don't burn trees, wreaths or wrapping paper in the fireplace.

For more information on holiday safety, visit the National Safety Council website at [www.nsc.org](http://www.nsc.org) or Electrical Safety Foundation International at [www.esfi.org](http://www.esfi.org).