



FSA – Keeping You Safe

Public Safety Tip: Fire Safety for the Holidays

When you think about chestnuts roasting on an open fire, you probably don't think "fire hazard." But unfortunately, fire can be a very real danger during the holidays.

According to the American Red Cross, nearly 47,000 fires occur each year during the holidays. With care and caution, however, you can protect your family from the risk of a home fire during the holidays. Here are a few basic fire safety tips to keep in mind. Pick stations that are well-lit and have video surveillance cameras at the pump.

Outdoor Decorations

Outdoor decorations are a beloved tradition – from festive lights to inflatables and more. But this tradition can bring dangers when decorations are old, damaged or used incorrectly.

Check Your Lights. Inspect all holiday lights to check for frayed wires, damaged sockets, or cracked insulation. Replace any defective strands. If you're using lights outdoors, make sure they are certified for outdoor use to prevent water damage and short circuits.

Don't Overdo It. Avoid overloading electrical outlets. Use power strips with built-in circuit breakers to prevent overheating. Consider switching to LED lights this year, as they emit less heat, reducing the risk of fire hazard. They are also energy efficient.

Take a Break. Consider using timers for your holiday lights. This prevents them from being left on overnight, reducing the risk of fire. You should always turn off holiday lights and decorations when you go to bed or leave the house to prevent accidents in your absence.

Fireplaces and Candles

While firelight creates a warm holiday glow, both fireplaces and candles present their own safety risks.

Decorate Carefully. If using candles, keep them in stable holders and away from flammable materials. Never leave candles unattended or in reach of children. Consider using electric or battery-operated candles instead of real ones. This eliminates the risk of burns or fire accidents associated with open flames.

Keep Up with Maintenance. If you have a fireplace, have your chimney inspected and cleaned annually. Always use a sturdy fireplace screen to prevent sparks from flying into the room. If you use a wood-burning fireplace, dispose of ashes in a metal container, stored outdoors, and away from the house.

Don't Leave Children Unattended. Teach children about the dangers of the fireplace and explain why they should never touch it. Regularly remind them about the safety rules. You should also always supervise children when the fireplace is in use.

Heat Carefully. Using space heaters for warmth instead? Keep them at least three feet away from anything that can burn, and turn them off when leaving the room or going to bed.

Christmas Trees and Decorations

Whether you choose a real or artificial tree, it's important to keep fire safety in mind.

Check Your Artificial Tree. If you're using an artificial tree, check that it's labeled as fire-resistant. Make sure decorations, especially ones on the tree, are securely fastened to prevent them from falling into the fireplace or onto heaters.

Care For Your Real Tree. If you have a real Christmas tree, keep it well-watered. Dry trees are highly flammable.

Decorate with Care. Choose flame-resistant or flame-retardant decorations whenever possible.

Holiday Cooking

Thanksgiving is the [No. 1 day for home cooking fires](#) (followed by Christmas Eve and Christmas Day). Don't let your favorite holiday dish turn into a holiday disaster – remember to follow safety precautions in the kitchen this year.

Check Your Appliances. Ensure appliance cords, especially those of ovens and microwaves, are not damaged or frayed.

Don't Walk Away. Never leave cooking food unattended on the stovetop. If you need to leave the kitchen, turn off the stove, or ask someone else to keep an eye on it. When baking or roasting, use a timer to remind you to check the progress of your food regularly.

Choose Safer Options. Think twice before deep frying that frozen turkey. If you're unfamiliar with the process or don't feel confident in your ability to deep fry a turkey safely, consider using alternatives like oven roasting it or purchasing a pre-cooked fried turkey. Safety should always be the top priority when working with hot oil and open flames.

Stay Safe with FSA

The holidays are a time filled with joy, family traditions and the spirit of togetherness – and by following these fire safety tips, you can celebrate safety with those you love. The bottom line: Use common sense, be aware of your surroundings and always put safety first.

The [Florida Sheriffs Association](#) is committed to helping you stay informed and stay safe. You can [read more crime and public safety tips here](#).

For more tips, please visit the [Florida Sheriffs Association's Crime Prevention Tips](#).