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Don't Let Your Holidays Go Up in Flames!

(SUNRISE, FL) - When most people think about the holidays, family festivities and good cheer likely come to mind. What few of us consider is that the holidays also present an increased risk of fires involving cooking, Christmas trees, candles and other holiday decorations.

"As everyone gets busier during the holidays, we often become rushed, distracted or tired," says Sunrise Fire Chief Thomas DiBernardo. "That's when home fires are more likely to occur."

Fortunately, with a little added awareness about holiday cooking and decorating, the season can remain festive *and* safe for everybody.

Cooking - Unattended cooking is the leading cause of home fires and the related injuries, with most involving the stovetop.

- **Stay** in the kitchen while you're frying, grilling or broiling food; and **turn it off** any time you leave the kitchen.
- Keep anything that can catch fire away from the stovetop, such as oven mitts, wooden utensils, and towels.
- Create a "kid-free zone" of at least three feet around the stove.
- Keep a lid nearby when you're cooking to smother small grease fires. Slide the lid over the pan and turn off the stovetop. Leave the pan covered until it is completely cooled. For an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the door closed.

Christmas Trees – Of the 230 home fires caused by Christmas trees per year, one in every three are caused by electrical problems, and one in six result from a heat source that's too close to the tree.

- When choosing a real tree, make sure the green needles don't fall off when touched. Before placing it in the stand, cut 2" from the base of the trunk. Be sure to water it daily, and get rid the tree once it becomes dry.
- Make sure your tree is not blocking an exit, and is at least three feet away from any heat source, like fireplaces, space heaters, candles, heat vents, or hot lights.
- Use **indoor lights**, following the manufacturer's instructions for the number of light strands to connect. Replace any string of lights with worn or broken cords, or loose bulb connections.
- Always turn off Christmas tree lights before leaving the home or going to bed.

Candles - December is the peak month for home candle fires.

- Consider using **flameless** candles, which look and smell like real candles.
- When burning candles, keep them at least 12" away from anything that can burn, and remember to blow them out when you leave the room or go to bed.
- Use sturdy candle holders that won't tip over, and only on uncluttered surfaces.
- Avoid using candles in the bedroom - where more than one third of home candle fires begin - or other areas where people may fall asleep.
- Never leave a child or pet alone in a room with a burning candle.

With these tips in mind, **have a very happy, safe and wonderful holiday!**

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