



INFORMATION BULLETIN

Keep the Holiday Wreath ‘Green’

ABBOTSFORD, BC: December 4, 2014 - The holiday season is a time when there is an increased risk of home fires. Christmas trees, candle usage and holiday decorations can all contribute to seasonal home fires. Fortunately, with a little added awareness and some minor adjustments to holiday cooking and decorating, the season can remain festive and safe for everybody. By taking some preventative steps and following simple rules, most home fires can be prevented.

With unattended cooking as the leading cause of home fires and home fire injuries, residents are reminded to stay in the kitchen while frying, grilling or broiling food. Most cooking fires involve the stovetop, so keep anything that can catch fire away from it, and turn off the stove when you leave the kitchen, even if it's for a short period of time. If you're simmering, boiling, baking or roasting food, check it regularly and use a timer to remind you that you're cooking. AFRS also suggests creating a "kid-free zone" of at least three feet (one metre) around the stove and areas where hot food and drinks are prepared or carried.

December is the peak month for home candle fires. The nonprofit National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) statistics show that two of every five home decoration fires are started by candles. Abbotsford Fire Rescue Service encourages residents to consider using flameless candles as an alternate to open flames inside the house. If you do use traditional candles, it is recommended that you keep them at least 12" away from anything flammable, and remember to blow them out when you leave the room or go to bed. Use candle holders that are sturdy, won't tip over and are placed on uncluttered surfaces. Avoid using candles in the bedroom where many candle fires begin or other areas where people may fall asleep. Lastly, never leave a child alone in a room with a burning candle.

Each year, fire departments respond to home structure fires caused by Christmas trees. One of every three of them is caused by electrical problems, and one in five resulted from a heat source that's too close to the tree. Abbotsford Fire Rescue offers the following advice for picking, placing and lighting the tree:

- If you have an artificial tree, be sure it's labeled, certified or identified by the manufacturer as fire-retardant.
- If you choose a fresh tree, make sure the green needles don't fall off when touched; before placing it in the stand, cut 1-2" from the base of the trunk. Add water to the tree stand, and be sure to water it daily.
- Make sure the tree is not blocking an exit, and is at least three feet away from any heat source, like fireplaces, space heaters, radiators, candles and heat vents or lights.
- Use lights that have the label of an independent testing laboratory, and make sure you know whether they are designed for indoor or outdoor use.

- Replace any string of lights with worn or broken cords, or loose bulb connections. Connect no more than three strands of mini-string sets and a maximum of 50 bulbs for screw-in bulbs.
- Never use lit candles to decorate the tree.
- Always turn off Christmas tree lights before leaving the home or going to bed.
- After Christmas, get rid of the tree. Dried-out trees are a fire hazard and should not be left in the home or garage, or placed outside the home.
- Bring outdoor electrical lights inside after the holidays to prevent hazards and make them last longer.

By following these fire prevention tips and measures, residents can greatly reduce the risk of fires in households and enjoy a safe holiday season.

As an added reminder the Holiday Wreath will be up at Fire Hall #1 (32270 George Ferguson Way). The wreath has 31 green lights representing the 31 days in December. Our goal is to “Keep the Wreath Green” for the entire month. If a “Green” light is replaced with a “Red” light it will be due to a preventable residential fire occurring.

There will also be a sign board located at Hall #1 that lists the number of “Residential Fires”, the number of “Other Calls” and the “Total Number of Incidents”. This sign board will be updated every morning during December.

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For further information contact:

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Visit www.nfpa.org/holiday for more information and safety tips.