






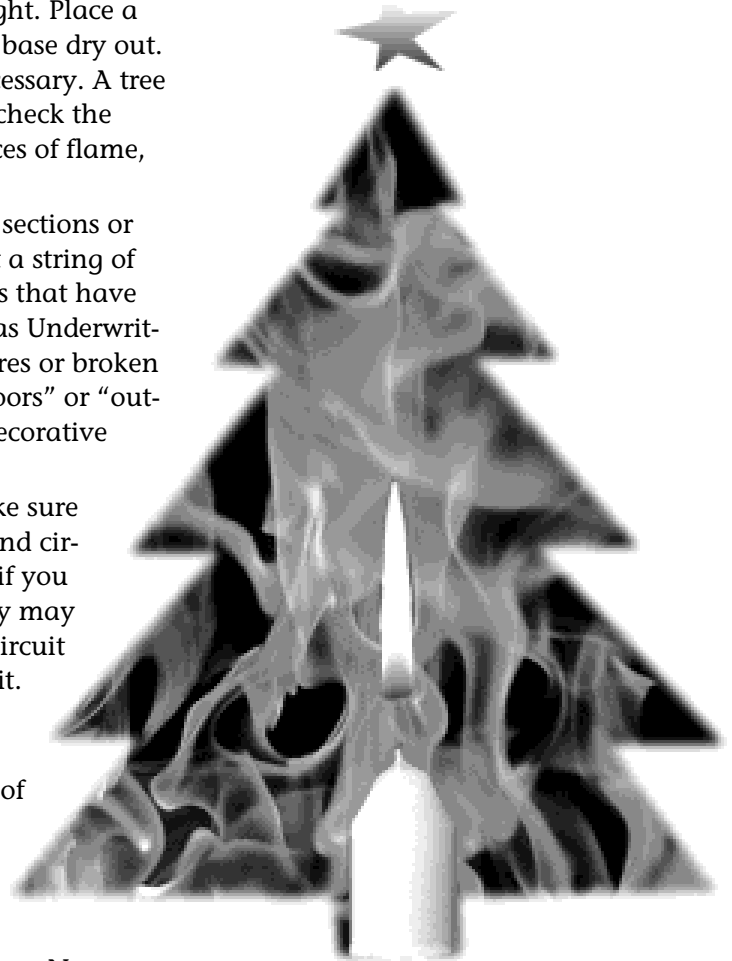


Fire is such an integral component of many holiday celebrations that people tend to overlook its hazards. From Halloween to Hanukkah, from Christmas to Chinese New Year, fire or fireworks are often seen as symbolic necessities for many celebrations. What's more, holidays often mean a greater use of electricity and electrical wiring, whether for kitchen appliances or holiday lights. This can bring its own fire risks as well. Here are some guidelines to help you reduce such risks and enjoy a fire-safe holiday.

-  Open flames from candles in a Halloween jack-o-lantern can catch on the flowing sleeves of a curious child's costume or wig. Supervise children carefully around open flames and use a low-watt light bulb instead of a candle inside a Halloween pumpkin.
-  Advent candles, a cinder from a fireplace or a spark from a frayed electrical wire can set a tinder-dry Christmas tree alight. Place a cut tree in a stand that holds water and don't let the base dry out. Otherwise, a seal will form and a new cut will be necessary. A tree may drink a gallon of water in the first 24 hours, so check the water level often. Don't place the tree near any sources of flame, such as a wall heater or fireplace.
-  Check old holiday lights each year for cracks, frayed sections or broken wires before putting them up. If you can't get a string of lights safely repaired, replace it. Buy decorative lights that have been tested by an independent testing agency, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL). Besides checking for broken wires or broken sockets (even on new lights) use lights rated for "indoors" or "outdoors" only in their appropriate areas. Turn off all decorative lights before you go out or go to bed.
-  Don't run cords under rugs or furniture legs and make sure you don't exceed the power capacity of each outlet and circuit in your home. Try to avoid extension cords, but if you have to use them, observe any power limitations they may have. Using a cord with too narrow a gauge for the circuit can cause it to get dangerously hot or short the circuit.
-  Make sure candles can't be easily knocked over. Anchor them securely in solid holders or candlesticks placed away from foot traffic and out of reach of children. This also goes for matches and lighters.
-  Have your fireplace and chimney checked and cleaned at least once a year. Make sure the flue is open before lighting a fire, and always place a metal screen or glass doors across the fireplace opening. Never leave the house or go to bed unless the fire is completely out and there are no glowing embers. Some gift containers, wrapping papers and ribbons are made of plastic or other synthetics that can cause toxic fumes if burned. Don't throw such things in the fireplace.
-  Keep a multipurpose (ABC-type) fire extinguisher handy and know how to use it. Remember to "PASS" the fire extinguisher:
 - P**ull the safety pin.
 - A**im at the base of the flame.
 - S**queeze the handle.
 - S**weep back and forth.

Holiday Safety

Fire



*Your best defense
against fires?
Smoke detectors
with working
batteries.*

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