



Keep Your Holidays Bright--and Safe!

The holidays glow with candlelight. The celebrations of Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa combine with the longest nights of the year to make December a popular month for using candles. Paying close attention to candle safety will help keep your holidays happy and safe.

Home fires started by candles have almost tripled in the last decade, peaking at 15,040 such fires in 1999, the latest year for which data is available from the National Fire Protection Association. Those fires caused an estimated 102 civilian deaths, 1,473 civilian injuries, and direct property loss of \$278 million.

December had almost twice the number of home candle fires of any other month. On Christmas Day, 200 home candle fires occurred -- five times the daily average seen throughout the year.

Nearly 40% of these fires occurred after candles were left unattended, abandoned or inadequately controlled. More than 20% occurred when a candle was left too close to some form of combustible material. About 8% were started by children playing with the candle.

Keep these rules in mind during the holidays and throughout the year:

- Like all ignition materials including matches and lighters, candles should be kept out of children's reach.
- Teach your children that candles, matches and lighters are for adults only. They are tools, not toys.
- Always keep a burning candle within sight. Extinguish all candles when you leave the room or go to sleep.
- Keep candles away from anything that can catch fire. That includes fabric such as clothing or curtains, books, paper, Christmas trees and flammable decorations.
- Use a sturdy candleholder that is meant for candle use. Place on a stable, heat-resistant surface.

For the National Fire Protection Association's Fact Sheet on Candle Safety, visit <http://www.nfpa.org/Research/NFPFactSheets/CandleSafety/CandleSafety.asp>

For more tips on safe candle use, visit the National Candle Association at <http://www.candles.org/UseAndSafety/candlesafetytips.htm>

For a "Candle Circle of Safety" graphic that helps everyone remember important candle safety messages, visit the Massachusetts State Fire Marshal website: <http://www.state.ma.us/dfs/lifesafe/candlesafety.htm>