



UL AND THE NFPA OFFER TIPS FOR HOLIDAY SEASON SAFETY

Simple guidelines can help keep homes festive and fire free

Whether you're heading 'over the river and through the woods' to grandma's this year, or hosting friends and family at your house, Underwriters Laboratories Inc. (UL) and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) remind you to be careful this holiday season.

For the sixth consecutive year, the NFPA is helping UL in working for a safer world by cosponsoring UL's Operation Decoration holiday safety campaign. The program is aimed at helping the public prevent home fires, as well as electric shock and other injuries, which are far too common during the holiday season and winter months.

Recent NFPA statistics illustrate that more than one-third of all home fire deaths in the United States occur during the winter months. UL and the NFPA are urging consumers to protect themselves, their loved ones, and their homes from the potentially devastating effects of a home fire by heeding the following tips on cooking, heating and candle safety:

Safer Cooking

According to the NFPA, cooking has been the leading cause of home fires since 1990. UL and the NFPA offer these fire safety tips to follow while cooking during the holidays or at any time of the year:

- Turn off and unplug all small appliances when not in use. Periodically check on food being cooked in an oven, microwave, or on the stove.
- Use caution when using electrical appliances. Never plug more than one high wattage appliance into a single outlet. Check appliances for frayed or cracked cords and make sure to have them repaired by a professional technician if needed. Never stand in or near water when using electrical appliances.
- Keep young children at least 3 feet away from kitchen appliances when cooking. If you allow older children to cook, supervise them closely and teach them safe cooking practices.
- Dress appropriately for cooking. Wear short or tight-fitting sleeves, avoid long, dangling jewelry, and use caution when working near heat sources.
- Have plenty of fire-resistant potholders and oven mitts ready for use while cooking.
- Turn handles inward so pots and pans won't be pulled or knocked off the stove.
- Keep the stovetop clean and clear. Accumulated grease or food matter could lead to a fire. Store combustible materials away from heat sources.
- Save operating instructions for rarely used appliances and reread them before each use.

Safer Home Heating

According to the NFPA, a home fire occurs every 82 seconds in this country. In 2000 alone, approximately 368,000 fires occurred in residences, killing 3,420 people and injuring 16,975. While home heating is usually a necessity during the colder months, home fires should not be a consequence! The safety professionals at UL and the NFPA offer the following tips and precautions when heating your home:

- Select heating equipment that bears the UL Mark. The UL Mark on a product means that UL engineers have tested representative samples of the product for foreseeable safety hazards.
- Install and maintain heating equipment correctly, and be sure it complies with local fire and building codes. Have local building or certified maintenance and repair technicians check and clean your heating system once a year.

- Keep all portable heaters and space heaters at least 36 inches (1 yard) from combustible materials, including furniture, bedding, clothing and pets.
- Turn off space heaters when you are not in the room or when you go to sleep. Supervise children at all times when space heaters are in use.
- If you have an electric space heater, check for frayed or split wires or overheating. Have all problems repaired by a professional technician before operating.
- If you have a liquid-fueled space heater, use only the fuel recommended by the manufacturer. Never use gasoline or any other substitute fuel. The wrong fuel could burn hotter than the equipment's design limits and cause a serious fire.
- When refueling, always turn off the heater and let it cool down completely before adding fuel. Wipe up any spills promptly. If you are considering buying a kerosene heater, be sure to check with your local fire department first to find out if it is legal in your community.
- Store the kerosene away from heat or open flame in a container approved by the local fire department, and be sure it is clearly marked with the correct name of the fuel (i.e.: kerosene).
- Have your chimney inspected by a professional heating technician prior to the start of every heating season and have it cleaned if necessary. Creosote, a chemical substance that forms when wood burns, builds up in chimneys and can cause a chimney fire if not removed.
- Always protect your family and home by using a sturdy fireplace screen in front of a fire.
- Remember to burn only wood -- never burn paper or pine boughs, which can float out the chimney and ignite your roof or a neighboring home. Do not use flammable liquids in a fireplace.
- If you are purchasing a factory-built fireplace, select one that is UL Listed and have it properly installed according to local codes.
- Do not start fires in your fireplace if the area around the fireplace and mantle are decorated with stockings or other combustible decorations.

Safer Holiday Lighting

Candles add a cozy touch to your home during the holidays, but if you're not careful, they can be a serious fire hazard as well. According to the NFPA, candles cause an average of 9,930 home fires each year. These fires were responsible for 119 deaths, 1,043 injuries and a property loss of \$144.5 million. Follow these fire prevention tips from UL and the NFPA to help keep your family safe from the dangers of candles:

- Be sure to place candles in sturdy, non-combustible holders, and keep them well away from decorations and other combustible materials. Check candles frequently to make sure they don't burn down too far.
- Don't leave children unattended in a room with lit candles, and always keep candles, as well as matches and lighters, up high and out of the reach of children.
- Don't display lit candles in windows or near exits in case you need these to escape.
- Under no circumstances is it safe to use lit candles to decorate Christmas trees!

For more consumer safety information, visit <http://www.ul.com/regulators/pubedu.html>

Underwriters Laboratories Inc. (UL) is an independent, not-for-profit testing and certification organization that has been working for a safer world by evaluating products, materials and systems for more than a century.