

HOLIDAY FIRE SAFETY

Halloween

Halloween is meant to be spooky and fun but it's also important to keep it safe for your children, your friends and yourself.

A simple ghost costume made from an ordinary bed sheet can be consumed by flames if ignited. Purchase only flame-retardant costumes and masks. And be sure costumes fit properly to prevent tripping and falling. Masks should allow full vision.

If trick-or-treating door-to-door, wear something reflective, carry a flashlight and travel in groups for safety. Keep well off the streets and remove masks before crossing the streets. Better yet, have a spooky party and stay in with your friends.

Check all treats carefully before eating them. Report anything suspicious. Instead of a candle to light a jack-o-lantern, use a small flashlight or a liquid light that glows for several hours after you bend it.

Never use combustible materials in a haunted house, especially Styrofoam and other plastics, gauze type materials and other loose flammables such as leaves and papers. These materials can quickly cause the spread of fire. This situation can be especially dangerous when the fire starts in a confined space such as the dark interior of a haunted house display.

Haunted house operators should be careful not to block exits for fire escape and emergency lighting systems must remain in operable condition. Fire escapes also should be clearly marked. People with questions on what materials are acceptable for use in putting up a haunted house display should contact the Guam Fire Department at (671) 472 - 3304.

Christmas

Trees

Christmas trees that are not kept moist can present a very serious fire hazard. A dried out Christmas tree can be totally consumed by fire in less than 30 seconds. Take special precautions when buying your Christmas tree. Trees with brown shedding needles should be rejected. If the tree looks green and fresh, take a long needle and bend it between your thumb and forefinger. If it snaps, the tree is too dry. Look for trees with needles that bend. When the trunk of a tree is bounced on the ground, a shower of falling needles shows that tree is dry.

When you bring a tree home, cut about an inch off the end of the trunk. This will remove the dried end and allow the tree to absorb water. Make checkerboard cuts into the base at different angles to make a greater surface for water absorption.

Always turn off lights on trees and other decorations when you go to bed or leave your home. A short circuit in any of this equipment could cause a fire. Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. Damaged insulation in lighting on a metallic tree could cause the entire tree to be charged with electricity. To avoid this danger, use colored spotlights above or beside a metal tree, never fastened onto it.

Keep children away from light sets and electrical decorations. All lights present the problem of shock and casualty hazards for curious kids. When you are stringing the lights on your tree, be careful how you place them. Keep all bulbs turned away from gifts and paper ornaments. Lights in windows can cause curtains and drapes to ignite.

Candles

Candles are a traditional and beautiful part of the season. But they are still a direct source of fire in your home. Keep candles a safe distance from other things. And remember that a flickering flame is a thing of fascination to little children. Keep candles out of their reach.

- Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens.
- Always use non-flammable holders.
- Keep candles away from other decorations and wrapping paper.
- Place candles where they cannot be knocked down or blown over.

Paper

Dispose of gift-wrappings soon after opening presents. A room full of paper lying around on the floor is just one more holiday hazard. Place trash in an approved container. Do not burn wrappings in the fireplace. They may ignite suddenly and cause a flash fire.

Christmas Gifts

One of the best Christmas gifts you can get someone is a smoke detector. A smoke detector is worth so much, possibly a loved one's life, yet so inexpensive. Over 90 percent of fire deaths occur in residential dwellings between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. when occupants are asleep. Smoke detectors alert occupants when a fire is still small and there is still time to escape.

Holiday Plants

Holly and mistletoe can be fatal to a small child and the smaller the child, the smaller the dose that can cause serious medical problems. Poinsettia leaves are not fatal if swallowed, but can cause a skin rash and an upset stomach. Call 9-1-1 if your children ingest any of these holiday plants.

Trimming The Tree

When choosing the finishing touches for decorating your tree, purchase tinsel or artificial icicles of a non-leaded material. Leaded materials may be hazardous if eaten by children or pets.

Avoid any decorations that tend to break easily or have sharp edges. Keep tree trimmings that are small or have removable parts out of the reach of your child. These pieces may be swallowed.

Lights

Use only lights that have been tested for safety. Identify these by the UL label from Underwriters Laboratories or another reputable testing agency. Check each set of lights for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires or loose connections.

Check labels of lights to be used outdoors to see that they are suitable for outdoor use. Never use indoor lights outside. Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, walls or other firm support to protect them from wind damage. Use no more than three sets of lights per single extension. Read the manufacturer's instructions carefully and do not use more than the recommended number of lights in one circuit.