**December**

**Week 1: Christmas Tree Safety**

Each year, fire departments nationwide respond to an average of 210 structure fires caused by Christmas trees. A heat source too close to the Christmas tree started a fire one of every five (18%) of these fires. Christmas tree fires are not common, but when they occur, they are likely to be serious. Carefully decorating Christmas trees can help make your holidays safer. If you have an artificial tree, be sure it is labeled, certified, or identified by the manufacturer as fire retardant. If you select a live tree, select one with fresh, green needles that do not fall off when touched. The trunk should be sticky to the touch. Old trees can be identified by bouncing the tree trunk on the ground. If too many needles fall off the tree has been cut too long, has probably dried out, and is a fire hazard. Before placing the tree in the stand, cut 2 inches off the bottom. Make sure that the tree is placed way from flammable materials and to water the tree daily. If you decide to light your tree, use lights that have the label of an independent laboratory. Some lights are made for indoor or outdoor use, but not both. Replace any string of lights with worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections. Always turn off the Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to bed. You should get rid of your tree when the needles start to drop. Dried out trees are a fire hazard. You can dispose your tree by taking it to a recycling center or having it hauled away by a community pick-up service.

**Week 2: Candle and Holiday Décor Hazards**

Nothing spreads cheer quite like holiday decorations, but care must be used to ensure your festive winter décor is fire-safe. Candles are widely used in hoes throughout the holidays; December is the peak month for home candle fires. If you use candles, make sure they are in stable holders and place them where they cannot be easily knocked down. You should never put lit candles on a tree or leave your house with the candles burning. Keep candles 12 inches away from anything that can burn. Do not put candles in windows because blinds and curtains can close over them and cause a fire. Always use flashlights for emergency lighting, not candles. If you use lights to decorate your home, you should keep them well maintained. Inspect your lights for frayed wires, broken bulbs, or cracked sockets. Do not overload your electrical outlets. Connect strings of light to an extension cord before plugging the cord into the outlet. You shouldn’t link more than 3 light strands, unless the directions indicate it is safe. Turn the lights off before you leave your home or go to bed. Never put wrapping paper in the fire place, it can result in a very large fire, throwing off dangerous sparks and embers and may result in a chimney fire. All holiday decorations, including artificial Christmas trees, should be flame retardant (non-flammable).

**Week 3: Holiday Cooking Safety**

While cooking you have to be alert. Most kitchen fires happen because food was left unattended. No matter what you’re making you should always be around the food. Set timers to remind yourself to check the food. You should keep things that are flammable away from heat sources. Oven mitts, clothing, wooden utensils, and towels, can all catch flame easily. You should always keep a lid near by while cooking. If you have a kitchen fire smother the flames with the lid by sliding the lid on the pan. Turn off the burner, and do not attempt to move the pan. Keep the lid on the pan until it has cooled down. Never pour water onto a grease fire or discharge a fire extinguisher on the fire. In case of an oven fire turn off the heat and keep the oven closed. Follow all manufacturer instructions while using cooking appliances. If you use a microwave oven, use extreme caution. Microwaves can cause heat buildup which can easily cause fires. Microwaves should be placed so that all users heads are above the door.

**December Week 4: New Year’s Celebration Safety- Places of Public Assembly/Fireworks**

Going to places of public assembly can be fun. But it is important to be prepared for any type of emergency while having a good time. When you first arrive you should look around and make sure that everything seems safe and that you are comfortable with your surroundings. When you arrive to the party with your group, communicate and identify a meeting place outside just in case of an emergency. You should locate the exits. If there is an emergency get out (in an orderly fashion) and stay out. It is encouraged to attend a fireworks display rather than putting on your own. If you are using your own fireworks during the holiday, you should contact your local police and fire departments about the local ordinances concerning fireworks in your town. Children should never handle or light fireworks, including sparklers. Light fireworks on a smooth flat surface away from homes, dry leaves, and flammable materials. Do not relight fireworks that have malfunctioned.