



## **CHRISTMAS FIRE SAFETY TIPS**

It's that time of year again...Christmas. Time to drag out the decorations from the storage building and attics where they have been collecting dust since last winter and to transform the house into something you might see in the movie "White Christmas." Before this magical transformation takes place, there are few safety precautions to take first.

1. Start by inspecting the electrical connection and power cords on all decorations. This is an absolute must before installing any electrically powered Christmas decoration.
2. Minimize the use of extension cords. Most homeowners go overboard in the use of extension cords. If it is necessary to use extension cords to create this winter wonderland, keep their use to a minimum.

Instead of stringing three or four extension cords together, use one cord the proper length and make sure the cords are UL approved and constructed of a heavy gauge wire. Small light weight cords are the source of ignition in hundreds of house fires each year. Small brown household extension cords are not designed to carry the amount of electricity that most home



owners require to decorate their homes. Never place extension cords or any other electrical cord under a rug or floor mat.

The cords need the ambient (surrounding) air to stay cool. If the cords are covered by rugs they cannot stay cool and they are constantly stepped on. This breaks down the insulation and creates a weak spot in the insulation that can cause a fire or possibly electrocute someone.

Connecting too many strands of decorative lights together can cause excessive heat to build up in the cords. The old style lights most of us grew up with burn very hot compared to the new style LED lights. The LED lights burn considerably cooler and depending on the manufactures recommendation, multiple strands can be connected together without causing damage to the lights. The LED also uses far less energy than to do the older style lights.



## **THE PROPER USE OF CANDLES**

According to statistics provided by the United States Fire Administration, there are approximately 42 house fires caused by improperly used candles every day. The majority of these fires start because the burning candles are placed too close to combustible items such as curtains, linens, bedding and decorations.

The burning of candles is a popular practice and increases dramatically during the Christmas and Hanukkah seasons.

Statistics gathered by the United States Fire Administration as a result of fire investigations revealed that over one-third of the fires occur in the bedroom and twelve percent (12%) of those fires occur as a result of the resident falling asleep before extinguishing the candle. Thirty six percent (36%) of those fires result in death of the occupants of the house. Over one half of the deaths caused by unattended candle fires occur between the hours of midnight and 6:00am.

A few safety tips on using candles are as follows:

1. Make sure the candle holder is sturdy and in a place where it cannot be knocked over by children or animals.



2. Keep the lit candles away from items that can be easily ignited such as curtains, table cloths, bedding and other similar items.
3. NEVER LEAVE A BURNING CANDLE UNATTENDED!!!!
4. Always extinguish all candles before leaving your house or going to bed.
5. If using candles to decorate your house is a family tradition or part of your religion, please have an *all purpose/multi purpose portable fire extinguisher handy*. Household size extinguishers can be purchased at your local home improvement stores for a very reasonable price.

Contact the Fire Marshal at the City of Shenandoah with any questions at 281-298-5522 or by email at [jmiles@shenandoahtx.us](mailto:jmiles@shenandoahtx.us).

Best wishes for a safe and happy holiday season.