

HAPPY AND SAFE HOLIDAYS FROM THE PENN WYNNE FIRE COMPANY

No matter which of the many December holidays you and your family celebrate, the holiday season is a time to share with you family and friends. And while we certainly love riding on our fire trucks, we would also like to spend time with our families.

You can help! The best way for you to help us is to help yourselves have a safe holiday.

So, without further ado, here are some safety tips:

Chanukah, (Begins sundown on December 4, 2007), The Feast of Dedication and Lights marks the rededication of the Temple in 165 B.C.E. by Judah Maccabee after his victory over the Syrians who had defiled the sanctuary. Although Judah could only find enough oil to light the menorah for one day, a miracle took place, and it burned for eight. Therefore candles are light throughout the holiday, one each evening, until all eight are kindled on the last evening's celebration.

While candles add to our Chanukah traditions, they can also be a serious fire hazard as well. Increased activity and excitement often make people less careful just when they should be most cautious. According to the "National Fire Protection Association", nearly 7,590 home fires are caused by candles every year. Be sure to follow these fire prevention tips when using candles:

- Keep the menorah away from curtains or any other flammable objects.
- Don't leave children or pets unattended in a room with a lit menorah, and always keep candles, as well as matches and lighters, up high and out of the reach of children.
- Don't display a lit menorah in a window or near exits in case you need these to escape.
- Create a safe place in the home in which the multiple candles of the menorah can safely be lit.
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Don't let one of the most joyful of holidays turn into a tragedy. Teach your family fire-safe behavior and have a wonderful and safe Chanukah.

A real tree can add to the spirit of Christmas by filling your home with beauty and the scent of pine. Unfortunately, a real tree can also pose a fire hazard. Each year, more than 400 residential fires involve Christmas trees and tragically nearly 40 deaths and 100 injuries result from those fires. There is also about \$10 million in property damage and loss. In addition, there are more than 13,000 candle-related fires each year, which result in 140 deaths and \$205 million in property loss.

Select a fresh tree by looking for one that is green. The needles of pines and spruces should bend and not break and should be hard to pull off the branches. Run your hand down a branch, you should not come away with a handful of needles.

On fir trees, a needle pulled from a fresh tree will snap when bent, much like a fresh carrot. Also, look for a trunk sticky with sap.

Cut off about two inches of the trunk (the people you buy this from will probably do this for you). Put the tree in a sturdy, water-holding stand. Keep the stand filled with water so the

tree does not dry out quickly. Make sure your tree is not thirsty! Generally, each day your tree will "drink" a quart of water for every inch of trunk diameter. (For example, a tree with a 4" diameter will use 1 gallon of water per day for the first several days.)

Stand your tree away from fireplaces, radiators and other heat sources.

Place a fire extinguisher near your tree for additional safety.

DO NOT burn your tree in the fireplace! Dry Christmas trees burn very hot and extremely fast.

If you use an artificial tree, choose one that tested and labeled as fire resistant. Artificial trees with built-in electrical systems should have an Underwriters Laboratory (UL) label. Purchase a tree that is labeled "Fire Resistant." Although this label does not mean the tree won't catch fire, it does indicate the tree will resist burning and should extinguish quickly. Never use electric lights on a metallic or metal-framed tree. Faulty lights can charge the tree with electricity, possible resulting in electrocution.

While it seems pretty obvious, only use indoor lights indoors (and outdoor lights only outdoors). Look for the UL label. Check lights for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections. Given how cheap lights are now, if you find a problem, throw the set away.

Don't overload your electrical circuits and turn off all lights on trees and decorations when you go to bed or leave the house.

Outdoor electric lights and decorations should be plugged into circuits protected by ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) to protect against electric shock. Portable outdoor GFCIs can be purchased where electrical supplies are sold. GFCIs can also be installed permanently to household circuits by a qualified electrician.

Use only non-combustible or flame-resistant materials to trim a tree. Choose tinsel or artificial icicles of plastic or nonleaded metals. Leaded materials are hazardous if ingested by children.

Keep burning candles within sight.

Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens. Always use non-flammable holders, and place candles out of reach of children and pets. Never place burning candles near curtains, plants, flowers or other flammable objects.

In homes with small children, take special care to avoid sharp or breakable decorations, keep trimmings with small removable parts out of the reach of children who could swallow or inhale small pieces, and avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food that may tempt a child to eat them.

To avoid eye and skin irritation, wear gloves when decorating with spun glass "angel hair."

To avoid lung irritation, follow container directions carefully while decorating with artificial snow sprays.

Kwanzaa (or Kwaanza) is a week-long Pan-African festival primarily honoring African-American heritage.^[1] It is observed from December 26 to January 1 each year, almost exclusively in the United States of America.

Kwanzaa consists of seven days of celebration, featuring activities such as candle-lighting and pouring of libations, and culminating in a feast and gift-giving. It was created by Ron Karenga, and first celebrated from December 26, 1966, to January 1, 1967. Karenga calls Kwanzaa the African American branch of "first fruits" celebrations of classical African cultures.

Kinaras, the traditional candle holder symbolic of African-American roots, share space in kwanzaa celebrating households. To them, Kwanzaa is an opportunity to incorporate elements of their particular ethnic heritage into holiday observances and celebrations of Christmas.

While we certainly don't want to "Grinch" up your holidays, the safer you are, the happier we all will be.

Have a safe and happy holiday season. In case you are interested, most of us wear an "XL".

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