

Avoid Holiday Fire Disasters Through Safe Candle Use

Candles lend a special light to the holiday season, at Halloween and Dia de los Muertos, Thanksgiving, in Advent wreaths, Menorahs, luminarias, and Kwaanza Kinas. Candle safety is important 365 days a year, but especially during the October-December holiday season. Here are some basic rules that everyone should commit to memory.

- Young children should be taught to stay away from lit candles. Keep lit candles out of reach of children and pets. Candle lighting is not an appropriate activity for small children, so keep all matches and lighters out of the sight and reach of children. Older children can learn to use them under adult supervision.
- Burn candles away from drafts, other heat sources, and all flammable objects or materials. In other words, *never* use candles near windows or exits. Don't place them on Christmas trees, real or artificial. Keep burning candles away from curtains, wrapping paper, combustible decorations and displays, flammable liquids, and aerosol sprays, such as hair spray, which can **explode**. Never allow a candle flame to touch any glass surface. Don't burn candles more than four hours at a time.
- Unattended candles are an invitation to disaster, so don't forget to snuff out candles before leaving the room or going to bed. Blowing candles out doesn't do the trick: Extinguish them by wetting the wick.

Here are some tips for burning candles safely:

- Candles other than jar candles must be used in an appropriate non-tipping, non-flammable holder. Make sure that candle containers and holders are made from tempered glass or have a proper glaze. All candles should be placed on a safe, heat-resistant dry surface. If possible, place glass chimneys or shades over them. For Christmas luminarias, use 15-hour votive candles in holders, placed in paper bags filled with at least 2 inches of sand. The candle must be of a size that will allow adequate space between the candle and bag so as not to ignite the bag.
- Remove labels and tags from candles before burning.
- Keep wicks trimmed to ¼ inch at all times. This inhibits smoking and carbon build-up at the tip of the wicks and provides a cleaner burn.
- Sometimes a layer of liquid wax forms that causes the wick to fall to the side. To maintain an even burn, keep the wick centered. This will also protect the candle holder, since a flame that's too close for too long may crack the holder.
- Keep the wax pool free of foreign objects such as wick trimmings and matches. They will interfere with proper burning and are flammable.
- Extinguish taper or pillar candles when they get within 2 inches of their holders. Discontinue use of containers candle when ½" of wax remains.