

# **FIRE SAFE** South Carolina



A COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION PROGRAM

## Fire and Life Safety Guide

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#FireSafeSC

SOUTH CAROLINA OFFICE OF STATE FIRE MARSHAL | 141 MONTICELLO TRAIL COLUMBIA, SC 29203

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## Heating

Heating equipment is a leading cause of home fire deaths, according to the NFPA. Half of home heating equipment fires are reported during the months of December, January, and February. Some simple steps can prevent most heating-related fires from happening.

### Placement

- Keep heaters at least three feet away from anything that may catch on fire, such as furniture, rugs, or clothing.
- Place heaters on stable, flat, or level surfaces. Do not place a heater on furniture or carpet, unless otherwise indicated by the manufacturer.

### Use

- Before operating heating appliances, read the manufacturer's instructions and any warning labels.
- Do not leave a heater unattended. Turn off heaters when you leave and NEVER use a heating appliance such as a portable space heater while you're sleeping.
- Plug heaters directly into a wall outlet. Do not use a power strip or an extension cord to power heating appliances.
- Do not attempt to move a heater while it is in use. To prevent burns, wait until the heater has cooled.
- When using a fuel burning heater, only use the kind of fuel specified by the manufacturer.
- Do not fuel a heater while it is in use. Wait until the heater has been turned off and has cooled.

### Storage

- Unplug electric space heaters when not in use.
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- Before storing, make sure any heating appliance is cooled down completely before storing.
- Only store heater fuel in appropriate containers. Do not mix fuel types.
- Do not store fuel burning heaters until the fuel has been removed from the heater and stored properly.

### Safety Tips

- Inspect heaters for damage, looking for cracked or broken plugs as well as loose connections and frayed wires. If damage is found, do not use.
- Never use an oven to heat a home.
- Install and maintain carbon monoxide (CO) alarms to avoid the risk of CO poisoning.
- Do not use fuel burning heaters in closed and confined spaces; always maintain a steady source of fresh air.
- Create a safe zone of 3 feet around heaters that is free from flammable materials, kids, and pets.

## Outdoor Electrical Safety

Electricity is an essential part of our daily activities. Fires of an electric origin are common and even fatal. It is important to use electricity safely on the outside of the home. There are several key points to remember while preparing for outdoor electricity. Protecting against these types of hazards is easy, but requires diligence.

### Outdoor Electrical Products

- To prevent moisture from entering, outdoor electrical products are equipped with heavily insulated cords and molded-on plugs.
- Inspect your outdoor products periodically for damage to cords, plugs, or wiring.
- Avoid shock hazards. Electrical products not designed to be used outdoors can be destroyed or become a hazard.
- Only keep outdoor appliances plugged in and turned on when in use.
- Store products inside and away from water and excessive heat.
- Never leave electrical products unattended outdoors.
- Do not use electrical products near water, or while wet.

### Electrical Cords

- When using extension cords outdoors, be sure it is marked “For Outdoor Use.”
- Outdoor cords are weather resistant. Medium-to-heavy gauge extension cords have connectors molded onto them to prevent moisture entering, and outer coatings are designed to withstand being dragged along the ground.
- Never modify an electrical cord.
- Only use extension cords temporarily. Prolonged use can cause overheating and fire.
- Leave electrical cords uncovered and avoid putting them where they can be damaged.

### Hot Tubs, Spas, and Pools

- Keep outlets near hot tubs, spas, and pools covered and dry.
- New outlet covers are available offering weather protection while a plug is inserted into the outlet.
- Never handle electrical items, plugs, or outlets when wet.
- If an electrical product falls into water, do not reach into the water for it.

### Electrical Safety

- Use properly rated light bulbs for fixtures.
- Call a licensed electrician for any serious or reoccurring electrical issues.
- Do not attempt to do electrical work without the proper training and licensing.
- Keep outdoor outlets covered and dry between uses.

## Holiday Decorations

As the holiday season draws near, many of you are preparing to decorate your homes with decorations to get in the holiday spirit. Please remember, if not used carefully, many of our favorite decorations carry the risk of fire or electrical injury. Don't let a preventable accident take the enjoyment out of your holidays. Remember to be safe and follow these simple steps to fully enjoy this time of year.

### Christmas Trees

- Before making the final tree decision, be sure its needles are fresh, green, and firmly attached to the branches.
- Bend the needles between your fingers. If they break, the tree is too dry.
- Check to make sure the tree trunk surface is sticky to touch. Christmas trees with thicker needles take longer to dry out.
- Improve the tree's water intake. To expose fresher wood, be sure to cut a couple of inches off the bottom of the trunk
- Keep your tree watered. A tree stand should have the capacity to hold at least one gallon of water, which is the amount of water the average six foot tree can consume in a day.
- Water your live tree daily.
- If you choose to go with an artificial tree, be sure that it is flame retardant.

### Holiday Lighting

- Inspect all lights. Whether you have purchased new lights or using some from the past, inspect them. Also inspect any electric decorations and extension cords for signs of damage. Replace any damaged cords.
- Unplug your lights before changing bulbs, replacing fuses, or making any other repairs.
- Use lights and decorations in accordance with manufacturers' instructions.
- Check Christmas light wires to make sure that they're not warm to the touch.
- Use Christmas light clips and hooks to safely attach lights when decorating outdoors.
- For outdoor lights, only use heavy-duty extension cords. Use cords designed for outdoor use.
- Always turn off Christmas lights and decorations before going to bed or leaving the house.

### Safety

- Keep any sharp, weighted, or breakable decorations or objects out of children's reach.
- While burning candles, keep them within sight.
- Extinguish candles before going to bed or leaving the room.
- Keep candles on a stable, heat resistant surface.
- Lit candles should be placed away from flammable items.
- "Fire salts" produce colored flames when thrown into lit fireplaces. Use with care.

## Christmas Safety

- Make sure you have working smoke alarms.
- Have at least one working carbon monoxide detector in the house.
- Have a fire extinguisher available.
- Use only lights rated for outdoor use on the exterior of the home.
- Never use light strings that show signs of wear.
- Never use an indoor extension cord outdoors.
- Never plug an extension cord into another extension cord. Avoid overloading wall outlets.
- Keep outdoor electrical connectors above ground, and out of snow or water.
- Extinguish fireplace ashes before going to bed, or leaving the house.
- After a party, check under and around chairs, sofas, and other furniture for smoldering cigarettes if guests were smoking in the house.

## Christmas Tree Safety Tips

- Consider an artificial tree as it is much safer and cleaner. If using a real tree, leave it outside until ready to decorate. Make sure the tree is secured, and cannot be knocked over.
- Choose a tree with fresh, green needles that do not fall off when touched.

### Placing the Tree

- Make sure the tree is at least three feet away from any heat source (fireplaces, radiators, candles, heat vents, or lights).
- Make sure it is not blocking an exit.
- Daily add water to the tree stand.

### Lighting the Tree

- Use lights that have the label of an independent testing laboratory. Some lights are only for indoor or outdoor use.
- Replace any string that has worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections.
- Read manufacturer's instructions for number of light strands to connect.
- Never use lit candles to decorate the trees, whether it is an artificial or real tree.
- Always turn off Christmas tree lights before leaving home, going to bed, or when not in use.

### After Christmas

- Get rid of the tree. Dried-out trees are a fire danger and should not be left in the home or garage, or placed outside against the home. Check with your local community to find a recycling program.
- Bring outdoor electrical lights inside after the holidays to prevent hazards, and make them last longer.