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Winter is peak time for home candle fires

INDIANAPOLIS – December is the most common time for home candle fires. Candle fires peak on Christmas day, followed by New Year’s Day and Christmas Eve.

“Candle fires are more common around the holidays due to more candles burned and decorations are often close by,” said Jim Greeson, Indiana State Fire Marshal and Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) Division of Fire and Building Safety Director. “We urge extra caution during this time of the year. The holidays are a memorable time because of interaction with family and friends and shouldn’t be ruined by a holiday fire.”

IDHS Fire & Building Safety estimates that in 2007, approximately 122 home structure fires were started by candles. These fires resulted in an estimated direct property loss of over \$2 million.

The IDHS Fire and Building Safety Division recommend following these important candle safety tips:

- Never leave a burning candle unattended
- Extinguish candles before leaving a room, leaving your home or going to sleep. Falling asleep was a factor in 12% of home candle fires and 26% of associated deaths, according to the National Fire Protection Association.
- Keep candles at least 12 inches away from anything that can burn, including decorations, paper, wreaths and bows.
- Keep all candles, matches and lighters out of reach of children and pets.
- Make sure lit candles are not in places where they can be accidentally knocked over.
- Use sturdy, non-flammable candle holders that will collect dripping wax.
- Trim wicks to ½ inch. Long or crooked wicks can cause uneven burning and dripping.
- Don’t use candles in bedrooms and sleeping areas.
- Don’t use candles as a decoration on a Christmas tree.
- Use a flashlight, not a candle, for emergency lighting.
- Consider using battery-operated flameless candles.
- Extinguish candles when they burn down to within two inches of their holder or decorations.
- To avoid hot wax spatter, blow out a candle by holding your finger in front of the flame and blow at it. The air will flow around your finger and extinguish the candle from both sides, preventing spatter.

“It is also important for every residence to have a working smoke detector,” added Greeson. “It doesn’t take much effort, which makes it unfortunate that so many Hoosier lives have been lost due to the lack of a working smoke detector on each level of the home.”

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