



Winter Fire Safety Tips

Winter time is holiday time. Unfortunately, activities we engage in during the holiday season can create a lot of opportunities for fires to occur. The Fire Safety Division of EHS urges everyone to pay particular attention to fire safety during the holiday season whether you live in on campus housing or in a residence off campus.

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During the holiday season, electrical fires are one of the leading causes of damage to residential structures. Specific causes included:

- Overloaded wall outlets
- Misuse of extension cords and power strips
- Leaving lights on while asleep or away
- Using non UL listed holiday lights or light strands that are worn
- Using old or worn out electrical devices and cords

Refer to the [Holiday Fire Safety Policy](#) for more information about fire safety regulations during the holidays on campus.

How to Prevent a Fire in Your Residence Hall Apartment, Suite or Room:

- Candles are prohibited! DO NOT use candles in any residential facilities.
- Use only the surge protectors that are approved by student housing.
- Don't overload electrical outlets! This can be a potential ignition source.
- Appliances with an exposed heating element for cooking are prohibited.
- Keep your room clean! With less fuel, fire cannot spread as fast.
- Covering lights with curtains or tapestries is unsafe as they can heat up and catch fire.
- Use only items and appliances that are UL approved in your room.

The DO NOT's of Fire Safety:

- **DO NOT** tamper with or cover smoke detectors
- **DO NOT** tamper with the sprinklers
- **DO NOT** hang anything on the sprinkler heads
- **DO NOT** tamper with or activate fire alarms unless a true emergency exists
- **DO NOT** make false 9-1-1 calls

Engaging in any of these acts will lead to judicial sanctions and possible criminal charges!

In The Event of a Fire on Campus:

- **IF THE ALARM SOUNDS, GET OUT AND STAY OUT!!!**
- Make sure you grab your room key and proceed to the room door.
- Check the door before you open it. If the door is not hot, proceed to open it slowly.
- Once you are out of the room, close your door and stay low.
- Proceed to your nearest available exit and go outside.
- Once outside, go to the "Designated Meeting Place" and remain there.

If you are unable to evacuate your room, call Public Safety at 610-436-3311. Give the call taker all of your information.

If smoke is coming under the door, place a towel at the opening in order to prevent smoke from coming into your room. Open a window and signal that you need assistance then wait for rescue personnel to arrive.

Holiday Tree Safety Tips:

- Only artificial trees are permitted for use in all University Buildings.
- When purchasing holiday decorations including artificial trees, look for the "Fire Resistant" Underwriters Laboratories (UL) label.
- If you have a metallic tree, never use electric lights on it. A short circuit could cause an electrical shock.
- For off campus residents, when purchasing a live tree for holiday use, check for freshness. Make sure the needles are soft and don't fall off.
- Live trees need water, and lots of it. Cut about one inch off the bottom of the trunk before putting the tree in the stand. Add water and check the tree daily. Dry trees can catch fire and burn in seconds.

- Remove live trees from your home as soon as possible after the holidays. Most Christmas tree fires occur on or after New Year's Day.
- Do not position any tree where it may block an exit to the residence or access to fire protection equipment.

Holiday Lighting Safety Tips:

- Check each light set for damaged sockets or wires. Discard light sets and extension cords that are worn or cracked.
- Use UL approved light sets. Follow the manufacturer recommendations concerning the maximum number of light sets that can be connected together.
- Replace burnt out bulbs with bulbs of the same wattage as indicated on the tag attached to the light set.
- Turn off all lights when you go to bed or leave the residence.
- Use only light sets and extension cords marked "For Outdoor Use" outside your residence.
- Fasten outdoor lights securely with insulated clips or hooks. Use circuits protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs).

Cooking Safety Tips:

- Almost 44% of all residential fires are caused by careless cooking making it the #1 cause of fire in a residential setting.
- Do not leave cooking food unattended.
- Keep any combustible materials such as towels, potholders, papers, etc., away from any heat source. Don't wear loose fitting clothing while cooking.
- Do not attempt to move a pan of grease that is on fire. Put a lid on the pan to smother the fire, then turn off the heat, or use an ABC-rated fire extinguisher.
- Be sure to turn pot handles towards the back of the stove.

Space Heater Safety Tips:

- The use of fuel fired space heaters is prohibited on campus. Electric space heaters are permitted, but the unit to be used must be approved by Environmental Health and Safety.
- When plugging in electric space heaters, make sure that the outlet was designed to handle the load. Be safe. Do not plug anything else into the socket with the heater.

- Please refer to the [Portable Space Heater Policy](#) for more information regarding campus regulations for the use of space heaters.
- Keep all combustible materials at least 3 feet away from any heater - space heaters need space.
- Never use a range or an oven as a supplemental heating device. Not only is it a safety hazard, it can be a source of potentially toxic fumes.

Fireplace Safety Tips:

It is very important to make sure your chimney is cleaned out before transitioning into the winter months. Creosote buildup as seen below can cause a chimney fire if it is not cleaned out ahead of time.

- Hire a chimney sweep to clean out your chimney every fall.
- Use fireplace screens to keep sparks and fire debris inside the fireplace.
- Never leave a fire unattended.
- For natural gas fireplaces, get all connections and lines inspected before each season.

Remember that outdoor fireplaces can be just as dangerous as indoor units. Observe all safety precautions when using them.

Smoking Safety Tips:

- Smoking-related fires are a concern. Cigarette butts can smolder in the trash and cause a fire, so completely douse any smoking material with water before discarding.
- **Smoking is prohibited inside all campus buildings.**
- After a party, always check on, between and under upholstery and cushions and inside trashcans for smoking materials that may be smoldering.
- Keep matches and lighters up high, out of sight and out of reach from children - preferably in a locked cabinet. If your child sees you lighting candles or starting the fireplace, they may think it's OK for them to do it. Teach your kids about fire safety.

Smoke Detectors

All residential facilities on campus are provided with smoke detectors and sprinklers throughout the building. These devices are monitored 24 hours by the Department of Public Safety and are maintained throughout the year by certified technicians.

Fire data shows that over the past three years, on average nearly 75% of the people who died each year in residential fires did not have a working smoke detector in their home. Follow these tips to keep you, those you live with and your belongings safe from fire:

- Replace the batteries in your smoke detectors twice a year. When you change your clocks for Daylight Savings, change your batteries.
- Install smoke detectors on each level of your home and sleeping areas. Sleep with your bedroom door closed.
- Develop an escape plan with your family - at least twice a year. Include a nighttime drill.
- Make sure overnight guests also know your fire escape plan.

Fire Extinguishers

Remember the word **PASS** when using a fire extinguisher:

- **P**ull the pin and hold the extinguisher with the nozzle pointing away from you.
- **A**im low. Point the extinguisher at the base of the fire.
- **S**queeze the lever slowly and evenly.
- **S**weep the nozzle from side to side.

Other Winter Safety Tips

- Prepare for winter storm related hazards. Heavy snow and ice on trees and electrical lines can result in long term power outages. Significant snowfall may cause you to be homebound for a long period of time.
- Consider having an Emergency Pack with the following items to last 3 days;
 - Flashlight and Portable Radio with batteries
 - Water (one gallon per person per day)
 - Non-perishable food supply / Manual Can Opener
 - First Aid kit
 - Prescription Medications
 - Personal Hygiene items
 - Matches in a waterproof container
 - Cash (For when ATM's are not working)
- Check fire protection and safety equipment. Test your smoke alarms. Make sure all doors and windows open easily and are accessible for fast escapes. Make sure extinguishers are the proper type and that they are fully charged.

- Make sure your street numbers are posted properly and are visible.
- Plan your escape. Sit down with your family and make sure that everyone knows what to do in the event of a fire by designing a home escape plan. Make sure you have two ways out of every room and that you have a meeting place outside the home for the whole family.
- Practice the escape plan. Even the best plan is no good if it's not practiced.



610-436-3333