

Winter Safety Tips

As the weather turns colder and the holiday season approaches, it's necessary to take a few extra precautions to protect your home and family. Use these tips to stay safe all winter long.

Home Heating

- Have heating equipment, including furnaces, fireplaces and coal or wood stoves checked annually and cleaned as recommended.
- Use a sturdy fireplace screen to prevent sparks from flying into the room.
- Install a spark arrestor on top of your chimney to keep sparks from starting a fire on your roof or outside your home.
- Burn only well-seasoned wood in a fireplace or wood stove. Use paper or kindling to start the fire — not flammable liquids. And don't use artificial logs in wood stoves.
- Use space heaters with care. Place them on a firm, sturdy, noncombustible surface — at least three feet from flammable objects such as wallpaper, draperies and paper.
- Always turn off space heaters when leaving the room or going to sleep.
- Place portable generators outside your house, and away from windows, doors or vents. Also keep clear from trees or leaves.
- Never use a stovetop or oven to heat your home.

Holiday Decorations

- Keep Christmas trees well watered and away from fireplaces, space heaters and radiators.
- Use a sturdy, non-slip tree stand.
- Never block a doorway with a Christmas tree.
- Keep menorahs, kinaras or any other festive candles on a flat surface, and at least a foot from flammable items.
- Never leave a burning candle unattended.
- When possible, use battery-powered flameless "candles" instead of real ones.
- Always turn off decorative lights before leaving the house or going to sleep.

Holiday Cooking

- When doing holiday cooking, or any cooking, make sure your kitchen is equipped with a working smoke alarm and a multi-purpose ABC-rated extinguisher.
- Keep your stovetop and oven clean, as food and grease splatters can ignite.
- Keep an eye on ovens in use and make sure children stay away from stoves.
- Turn pan handles inward and use rear burners whenever possible.
- In case of an oven fire or microwave fire, keep the door closed and turn off the appliance.
- In case of a pan fire, don't try to put it out with water or with a fire extinguisher. Both can spread the flames and increase the fire. Instead, smother small grease fires with baking soda or by covering the pan with a small lid.
- No matter how busy you are during the holidays, never leave the house while the oven is on.