



## Fire & Life Safety Council

December 2009

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Franklin R. Timmons, CPP – Newsletter Editor

### A word from the Chair

Because of the close proximity to Christmas and the winter months approaching, I have included several news releases about tragic incidents that have occurred due to improper use of appliances, non working smoke detectors and the fact that occupants should have exited the buildings instead of attempting to fight the fire.



We are often times faced with the fact that folks want to stay and fight a fire underestimating how fast combustibles ignite and the debilitating heat and smoke that are created.

We must continue to encourage folks:

1. Ensure appliances, heaters, etc are periodically checked, well maintained and used only for the intended purpose of that appliance.
2. That smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors are functioning properly and that batteries have been replaced at least annually and then routine checked to ensure operability.
3. Have a plan for your family and when smoke is detected or fire breaks out, exit the home, building or structure, call the fire department and wait outside.

We have also included a holiday brochure that you can use for your organization, group or family.

Happy Holidays! Be Safe

## Stove Ignites Fatal Fire

### Connecticut:

An 85 – year - old man died of smoke inhalation after a gas stove ignited combustibles in the kitchen of his single family home.



The two-story, wood frame house was 48 feet wide and 24 feet long. Battery operated smoke detectors on the first and second floor had operated as designed.

When fire fighters arrived, they were hampered by a limited water supply and heavy fire within and around the structure.

The man's body was found on the second floor where he died of smoke inhalation. Investigators determined that he had unsuccessfully tried to extinguish the fire with a portable fire extinguisher. When that failed, the man opened the front door, and then walked upstairs to a bedroom to call the fire department on the home's only working telephone.

This delay allowed the fire to spread up the stairwell and trap the man on the second floor.

The victim apparently used one stove burner for cooking and used the balance of the stove top and area for storage.

## Lack of Working Smoke Alarms

### Florida:

A 62 – year old man died when an unattended candle started a fire in his manufactured home.

Two single-station battery powered smoke alarms had no batteries.

The man had left a candle burning when he went to bed and at some point it fell to the floor igniting some combustibles in close proximity.

The man awoke, but instead of escaping the fire, he attempted to fight the fire until he was overcome with smoke and heat. A passerby called the fire department.

After the blaze was extinguished the man's body was recovered.

## Issues with Electric Space Heaters

### Nevada:

Electric space heaters are to blame for two residential fires on Friday that left some area residents homeless.

The first fire, according to the Undersheriff was at 4 p.m. at. He said the single-wide trailer was fully engulfed by flames, but it was unoccupied at the time. The homeowner told authorities he left an electric heater on in the bedroom.

In a second fire later that day, fire fighters responded at 9:30 p.m. to a call that burned a bus, fifth-wheel trailer and motor home.

The battalion chief for the Nevada Division of Forestry said both fires were caused by electric space heaters left unattended. Another recent fire in the area was also caused by a space heater.

The battalion chief went on to say, "Nobody should ever leave a space heater on when unattended." "These are not intended to heat whole rooms or houses, and they should always be monitored by an adult."

### **Editorial:**

The recent night club fire in Russia again brings to the fore front, the use of fireworks or pyrotechnics in an indoor setting. In structures that have been designed to accommodate such things and under strict oversight, these indoor light shows can provide an increased level audience excitement and participation.

But, in small areas, with transient combustibles within lose proximity they can spell disaster, especially the correct oversight is lost and emergency exits are blocked or do not exist.

As protection professionals, we must do what we can to ensure that events under our control that might have live combustible special effects are well planned; supervised and contingency plans exist, in the unlikely event that an emergency should take place.



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## Winter Holiday Safety Tips

'Tis the season for extra decorations in the home...candles, ornaments, lights, trees, gift wrap, and more. Celebrating the holiday season safely, involves a little extra knowledge and planning. For more information on Winter Holiday safety or other seasonal safety tips, please contact your local site security organization or your local police.

### SHOPPING: AT ALL TIMES

- ❖ Use ATM machines in populated places and during daylight hours. Avoid ATMs where someone is loitering near the machine
- ❖ Keep your purse tucked tightly under your arm or carry your wallet in your front pocket.
- ❖ Keep a copy of all credit cards in case your wallet or purse is stolen.
- ❖ Don't carry a lot of cash at one time.
- ❖ Have your keys in hand as you approach your vehicle.
- ❖ Use the "buddy system" when shopping, especially after dark.
- ❖ When shopping, place packages in the trunk or otherwise out of sight in your vehicle. ALWAYS park in well lit areas.



### TREES

- ❖ Many artificial trees are fire resistant. If you buy one, look for a statement specifying this protection. A fresh tree will stay green longer and be less of a fire hazard than a dry tree.
- ❖ Fresh needles are hard to pull from branches. When bent between your fingers, fresh needles do not break.
- ❖ The trunk base of a fresh tree is sticky with resin. When the trunk of a tree is bounced on the ground, a shower of falling needles shows the tree is too dry.
- ❖ Place tree away from fireplaces, radiators, and other heat sources. Heated rooms dry trees out rapidly, creating fire hazards.



- ❖ Cut off about two inches of the trunk to expose fresh wood for better water absorption. Trim away branches as necessary to set tree trunk in the base of a sturdy, water-holding stand with wide spread feet. Keep the stand filled with water while the tree is indoors.

### FESTIVE LIGHTING

- ❖ Indoors or outside, use only lights that have been tested for safety.
- ❖ Check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections.
- ❖ Turn off all lights on trees and other decorations when you go to bed or leave the house.
- ❖ Make sure the read the instructions on light sets before using.



### CANDLES

- ❖ Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens.
- ❖ Never place lit candles on a window sill.
- ❖ Keep candles away from other decorations and wrapping paper.
- ❖ Place candles where they cannot be knocked down or blown over.



### TRIMMINGS/DECORATIONS

- ❖ Use only non-combustible or flame-resistant materials.

### *In homes with small children, take special care to:*



- ❖ Avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable.
- ❖ Keep trimmings with small removable parts out of the reach of children. Pieces could be swallowed or inhaled.
- ❖ Avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food. A child could eat them!

### FIREPLACES

- ❖ Before lighting any fire, remove all greens, boughs, papers, and other decorations from fireplace area.
- ❖ Check to see that flue is open.
- ❖ Keep a screen before the fireplace all the time a fire is burning
- ❖ Check smoke detector batteries.

### WINTER DRIVING

- ❖ Never leave your running vehicle unattended – even in your driveway!
- ❖ Get your vehicle tuned up; brakes, fluid levels, and exhaust system checked.
- ❖ Replace your wiper blades.
- ❖ Carry a first aid and emergency kit with snow scraper, booster cables, blankets and flashlight.
- ❖ Make sure the heater and defroster are in good working order.
- ❖ In winter conditions, allow at least 3 times the distance to reach a full stop and avoid skidding.

