

## S A F E T Y N O T E S

December 2012

### Holiday Hotspots

December is the time of year where a combination of cold weather and holiday festivity brings extra safety challenges.

Fireplace Alert: Many homes and businesses have installed gas fireplaces in recent years to add a cozy ambience as well as warmth.

Most of these devices currently do not have any type of safety screen on them. Even the most protective parent or grandparent may not be aware of the burn dangers associated with gas fireplaces.

Please review this special report from KOMO TV and Harborview Medical Center in Seattle that includes the story of a Spokane family and the challenges they faced when baby Brandon stumbled into the door of their gas fireplace. Lessons learned: Recognize the extremely high temperatures of the glass "screen" on a gas fireplace. Know that even decorative gas fireplaces can heat to a dangerous point for a child's skin. Ideally, keep gas fireplaces turned off when toddlers are in the area. Invest in appropriate screens for every type of room heating device when small children are likely to be present.

Fire Departments also recommend that licensed chimney sweeps clean standard wood-burning fire places once a year to eliminate any flammable buildup of creosote and prevent a roof fire. Incorrect disposal of fireplace ash results in predictable winter fires. Residents typically place warm ashes in cardboard boxes and set them on a wooden porch or next to the house or garage siding. These boxes often ignite resulting in the spread of fire.

Residents with fireplaces can also be reminded that wrapping paper should never be burned. The chemicals used to create the paper coloring can ignite suddenly and cause a serious flash fire.

Space Heaters: Space heaters should never be plugged into surge protectors or outlet strips. Any appliance that heats up should always be plugged directly into the wall outlet.

Space heaters should be unplugged whenever the adult is out of the room. Always unplug space heaters when people are going to sleep.

Keep anything that can burn (e.g. curtains, bedding, and stuffed animals) at least 3 feet away from space heaters or baseboard heaters.



Scan this QR code with your smart phone to view the video or [click here.](#)

Candles: The Fire Department encourages the use of battery-operated candles rather than open flame versions, especially when pets or children are in the home!

However, many residents will be using candles for Hanukkah, Las Posadas, Christmas, and Kwanzaa celebrations. Our “always and never” list includes these reminders: always keep open-flame candles in sturdy holders and away from decorations, evergreens, and wrapping paper; never leave a candle burning in a room without adult supervision and always keep lighters, matches and lit candles secured and out of the reach of small children.



Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New Year's Eve traditionally mark the three days with the highest incidence of candle-caused home fires in the U.S. each year.

Holiday Decorations: Despite a downward trend in holiday fires in the U.S. over the past several years, fires that do involve Christmas trees result in a higher rate of death: 1 of every 18 home Christmas tree fires entailed a fatality as compared with 1 of every 141 total reported home structure fires. While there isn't a State or local fire code regulation forbidding the use of fresh trees in apartment settings, landlords and managers can place some restrictions in the lease.

All fresh trees must be well watered and never placed close to fireplaces, radiators, or other heat sources. Trees and other decorations cannot block hallway access or any exits. Fresh trees must be discarded or recycled as soon as the needles begin to dry out.

Light strings should have tags showing they were tested by UL (Underwriter Laboratories) or ETL (Edison Testing Labs/Intertek). Never use more than three standard size light sets per extension cord. Discard light sets with cracked sockets or loose connections. Turn lights off whenever leaving the home or going to bed.

Spokane Fire Department wishes each of you a happy and healthy holiday season!

## Index for 2012 Apartment News

Back issues of all Spokane Fire Department “Apartment Safety Notes” can be viewed at [www.spokanefire.org](http://www.spokanefire.org) under “Prevention”. An index of topics covered in 2010 and 2011 is included in the December 2011 issue.

2012: **Dec.** Holiday fire concerns; **Nov.** CO detector installation deadline, Great American Smokeout and cigarette fires; **Oct.** Fire Prevention Week / escape planning, 20 year anniversary of the Children's Fire Safety House; **Sept.** emergency preparedness, Crime Free Multi-Housing training; **Aug.** Two sprinkler “saves” in Spokane, preschoolers and fire, poison alert on detergent balls, fan safety reminders; **July** “Grill Talk”, laundry room notes; **June** Fireworks ban, smoke-free housing campaign; **May** spring cleaning, clutter and fire risk, arson awareness, Fire-Stopppers, gel fuel recall; **April** building-level fire safety plans, Agnes Kehoe Place; **Mar.** Daylight Savings Time and detector connections, poison prevention week; **Feb.** “Hands Only” CPR, burn awareness; **Jan.** New Year fire safety checklist, “Put a Freeze on Winter Fires” national campaign.

You can sign up for this monthly newsletter, ask a fire-related question or suggest a specific safety topic by contacting Jan Doherty at [jdoherty@spokanefire.org](mailto:jdoherty@spokanefire.org) or by calling (509) 625-7058.



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