Holiday Candle safety Tips from the State Fire Marshall

Local News

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Posted on : December 8, 2009 at 7:13 am

The holiday season is here and with the increased usage of seasonal decorations, it is important to focus on candle fire safety. On average, one home candle fire is reported every 34 minutes. In fact, Christmas Day, Christmas Eve, New Year’s Day and New Year’s Eve are the top four days for home candle fires respectively. In Washington State, there were 133 fires started by candles in 2008 that caused $2.6 million in damages and 63 fires so far this year that have cause $1.5 million in damages.

“Set a good example for young children by using matches, lighters, and fire carefully. If you choose to use candles, ensure they are in sturdy metal, glass or ceramic holders and placed where they cannot be easily knocked down,” says State Fire Marshal Mike Matlick.

The Office of State Fire Marshal offers the following candle safety tips and facts:

· Use candles only in rooms where there is a responsible adult awake to control and oversee the flame. Falling asleep is a factor in 12% of home candle fires and 26% of the associated deaths.
· Do not use candles in sleeping areas. Almost 40% of home candle fires begin in the bedroom.
· Keep candles away from combustibles. More than half of all candle fires start when something that could burn, such as furniture, Christmas trees, decorations, window blinds, or curtains, is too close to the candle.
· Keep candles up high, out of reach of children. Young children and older adults have the highest death risk from candle fires.
· Never leave burning candles unattended. In 20% of candle fires, the candles are unattended or abandoned.
· Never put lit candles on a Christmas Tree. In December, 13% of home candle fires begin with decorations compared to 4% the rest of the year.

For more information on candle safety, please visit the Office of State Fire Marshal website at www.wsp.wa.gov/fire/firemars or the United States Fire Administration website at www.usfa.dhs.gov.

The Office of the State Fire Marshal is a Bureau of the Washington State Patrol, providing fire and life safety services to the citizens of Washington State including inspections of state licensed facilities, plan review of school construction projects, licensing of fire sprinkler contractors and pyrotechnic operators, training Washington State’s firefighters, and collecting emergency response data.