Frontline
Westerville Division of Fire Newsletter

Holiday Safety Tips to Reduce Fire Risk

Decorating homes and businesses is a long-standing tradition around the holiday season. Unfortunately, these same decorations may increase your chances of fire. By following a few simple fire safety tips, you can keep electric lights, candles and holiday trees from causing a holiday hazard.

Keep Trees Watered
Holiday trees account for hundreds of fires annually in the United States. Often, shorts in electrical lights or open flames from candles start tree fires. If you have a live tree, keep it well-watered at all times. Do not place your tree close to a heat source, including a fireplace or heat vent. The heat will dry out the tree, causing it to be more easily ignited if it meets a flame.

Maintain Holiday Lights
Inspect holiday lights each year for frayed wires, broken or cracked sockets and excessive wear. Do not link more than three light strands, unless the directions indicate it is safe. Periodically check the wires: they should not be warm to the touch. During installation, your personal safety is also very important. Always have someone else working with you to foot the ladder when hanging outdoor lights or decorations. Also, stay centered between the rails of the ladder and do not overreach to hang lights or decorations.

No Wrapping Paper in the Fireplace
Loose wrapping paper burns quickly and may result in flying paper embers being released into the chimney, which can result in a chimney fire. These embers can also move to the roof, which can cause a roof or attic fire. Also, any paper that has a glossy coating, such as wrapping paper and magazines, use synthetic inks and metal-based foils, which may release toxic material into the air when burned.

Never Leave Candles Unattended
Candles are popular during the holidays, but left unattended can be a fire hazard. Consider using battery-operated flameless candles, which look and operate like real candles. If you do use lit candles, ensure they are in stable holders and place them where they cannot be easily knocked down. It’s best to keep candles at least 12 inches from anything that can burn. Avoid using candles in bedrooms and sleeping areas.

Visible House Numbers Key to Quick Arrivals

Firefighters pride themselves on knowing streets and addresses in their district. However, even a veteran firefighter can be occasionally challenged by an address. In the past, Westerville firefighters used large map books to assist in locating an address. Although we still carry the books on our trucks, the fire department takes advantage of new technology, currently using GIS mapping to help quickly find the location of an emergency.

A computer mounted in each vehicle shows the exact location of a building, as well as fire hydrants and any known hazards or dangers that may exist at that location. Based on the address search on the map, the driver can be guided to the destination. This system is highly accurate and consistently updated to include new homes and addresses.

Even though we are using computerized maps, visible house numbers are important for a quick reference. House numbers should be easy to find and easy to read; at least four inches high and in a contrasting color to the house or mailbox. A light that illuminates the number at night is also helpful. Fancy numbers or numbers that are spelled out might be aesthetically pleasing, but are challenging to read from the street. Additionally, numbers are useless if they can’t be seen so make sure they are not obscured by trees or shrubs.

If your home is set back from the street, the number should be displayed on a gate post, fence, mailbox or other appropriate place that is visible from the street from any direction. If your home is located on a corner, your house number should face the street named in your address.
Brian Miller Named Deputy Chief

Brian Miller has been promoted to Deputy Chief of the Division of Fire. Miller has been with the Division for 14 years. He began as a part-time firefighter in 1999 and became full-time in 2000. Most recently, he served as Chief Fire Marshal, where he supervised the Fire Prevention Bureau. Miller will be in charge of division operations in his new position.

Welcome Home Ladder 111

Ladder 111 (L111) recently returned home to Westerville after a yearlong refurbishment, which required the rebuilding of its transmission, engine, pump and generator. L111, a 1998 Pierce Dash, was returned to Pierce Manufacturing in Appleton, Wisconsin for refurbishment. It was also updated with a seatbelt monitoring system for firefighter safety, a backup camera and traffic signaling bar in the rear of the truck as well as all new LED lighting.

The division uses refurbishment as part of the fleet management program, allowing extended life of certain vehicles and resulting in significant savings when compared to the purchase of new vehicles. L111 was refurbished at half the cost of the purchase of a new ladder truck. During this time, the Fire Division responded using a ladder truck on loan from Columbus Fire, which was returned to the City of Columbus in late October.

Fill the Boot: Westerville Firefighters Help MDA

The annual Fill the Boot campaign is a charitable event benefiting the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA). Last August, Westerville Professional Firefighters International Association of Firefighters Local 3480 raised more than $9,300 for the association. Across the U.S. and Canada, a total of $26.1 million was raised for the cause. For more information on this program, please visit http://www.iaff.org/MDA/history.asp.

Winter Safety

Slips, trips and falls can easily happen on wet and icy walkways and are common causes for injuries in the winter. Help us keep sidewalks clear after a snowfall. For more information, visit www.westerville.org/snow.

*A due to health regulations, smaller EMS/medic vehicles may not be used to transport food or grocery items. These vehicles are required to remain in station, at-the-ready for the transport of patients.