



MEDIA RELEASE

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Holiday Safety Tips from Knox County

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. —Christmas is the peak season for home fires, according to the National Fire Protection Association. While decorating is one of the easiest ways to get in the holiday spirit, Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs has teamed up with the Knox County Fire Prevention Bureau to demonstrate just how quickly decorations can become dangerous.

Watch the video [here](#).

Also, see below for an extensive list of safety tips from the Knox County Health Department, Knox County Solid Waste, the Fire Prevention Bureau and the National Safety Council.

Please note, COVID-19 testing at the Knox County Health Department will close at noon on Wednesday, Dec. 23 and the Public Information Line will close at 1 p.m.

All Knox County Government offices—including the Knox County Health Department, public libraries and convenience centers—will be closed Thursday, Dec. 24 and Friday, Dec. 25 in observance of the Christmas holiday.

KCHD will not test or operate the phone bank over the holiday, but daily case count updates and positive case notifications will continue uninterrupted. Other standard COVID-19 response activities will take place on Christmas Eve, not on Christmas Day. Standard operations will resume on Saturday, Dec. 26 and continue as normal through the weekend.

The Knox County Public Libraries and Knox County's Solid Waste Convenience Centers will begin operating on a regular schedule on Saturday, Dec. 26. Convenience Centers are expected to be busy with long lines and significant wait times. If possible, center users are urged to postpone regular waste trips until Tuesday, Dec. 29 or Wednesday, Dec. 30.

Decorations

One-third of home decoration fires are started by candles and that two of every five decoration fires happen because the decorations are placed too close to a heat source.

- Keep potentially poisonous plants—mistletoe, holly berries, poinsettias, and amaryllis—and breakable ornaments or ones with small, detachable parts away from children and pets.

- Make sure artificial trees are labeled “fire resistant” and ensure that live trees are well watered and removed from the home when it is dry.
- Place all trees at least three feet away from fireplaces, radiators, and other heat sources, making certain not to block doorways.
- Only use indoor lights indoors and outdoor lights outdoors and choose the right ladder for the task when hanging lights.
- Replace light sets that have broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections.
- Don’t overcrowd electrical sockets and turn off all lights and decorations when you go to bed or leave the house.

Winter Safety

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas that often goes undetected. Fatal levels of carbon monoxide can be produced in just minutes, even if doors and window are open. More than 400 people in the U.S. die from unintentional carbon monoxide poisoning every year.

- Install a battery-operated or battery backup carbon monoxide detector in the hallway near each separate sleeping area in your home. Check or replace the battery when you change the time on your clocks each spring and fall and replace the detector every five years.
- Have your furnace, water heater or any other gas or coal-burning appliance serviced by a qualified technician every year.
- Do not use portable flameless chemical heaters indoors.
- Make sure your fireplace damper is open before lighting a fire and well after the fire is extinguished.
- Never use a generator inside your home, basement or garage.
- Never run a car in a garage that is attached to a house, even with the garage door open; always open the door to a detached garage to let in fresh air when you run a car inside; better yet, only warm a car in the open air.
- If you think you’re experiencing any of the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning, go outside and get fresh air immediately and call emergency services, the fire department or 911. Do not go back inside until emergency responders have given you permission to do so.

Fire Safety

- Place candles where they cannot be easily knocked down or blown over and out of reach of children.
- Don’t burn trees, wreaths or wrapping paper in the fireplace.
- Always use a screen on the fireplace when a fire is burning.
- Never leave candles or fireplaces unattended.
- Check and clean the chimney and fireplace area at least once a year.

Waste Disposal

- Most giftwrap, cardboard boxes and paper products can be recycled in mixed paper and cardboard containers; it is crucial to remove any Styrofoam packing.
- Ribbons, bows and shiny gift bags; artificial Christmas trees; Styrofoam, air pillows and bubble envelopes are NOT recyclable, but can and should be reused when possible.
- Clothing and other textiles should be cleaned and donated.

- Never pour cooking oil or grease down residential drains or any public storm drains; this can cause costly problems for your home's plumbing and municipal sewers. It can be recycled at the cooking oil areas at any Convenience Center.
- Batteries should be placed in the battery recycling containers at any Convenience Center.
- Electronics and old Christmas lights can be recycled at Convenience Centers with Goodwill attended donation centers (Dutchtown, Halls, John Sevier, Karns).
- To avoid rodents and other pests around your bagged household trash, consider taking food waste to one of Knox County's seven Solid Waste Convenience Centers.
 - *Carter Convenience Center* – 8815 Asheville Hwy
 - *Dutchtown Convenience Center* – 10618 Dutchtown Road
 - *Halls Convenience Center* – 3608 Neal Drive
 - *John Sevier Convenience Center* – 1950 W. Governor John Sevier Hwy
 - *Karns Convenience Center* – 6930 Karns Crossing Lane
 - *Powell Convenience Center* – 7311 Morton View Lane
 - *Tazewell Pike / Gibbs Convenience Center* – 7201 Tazewell Pike

COVID-19

Traditional holiday gatherings with family and friends are fun but can increase the chances of getting or spreading COVID-19 or the flu. The safest way to celebrate this year is with your household or immediate family. If you choose to do otherwise, take appropriate steps to celebrate safely.

- Wear a mask so that it covers your nose, mouth and sits securely under your chin and fits snugly against the sides of your face.
- Stay at least 6 feet from people who do not normally live with you as some people without symptoms can spread COVID-19 and/or the flu.
- Wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds and keep hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol with you if you are unable to wash your hands.
- Use single-use options, like salad dressing and condiment packages, and disposable/recyclable food containers, plates, and utensils.
- Limit the number of guests and consider eating outdoors if weather permits.

Travel

According to the Centers for Disease Control, travel increases your chances of getting and/or spreading COVID-19. Staying home is the best way to protect yourself and others. If you do travel, consider the following safety recommendations.

- Review local guidance and restrictions for any destination you plan to visit before you leave.
- Consider getting tested 1-3 days before your trip and 3-5 days after your trip and reducing non-essential activities for a full seven days after travel, even if your test is negative.
- Don't travel if you are sick and don't travel with or to visit someone who is sick.
- If you have had a known exposure to COVID-19, you should delay travel, quarantine yourself from other people, get tested, and monitor your health.
- Wear a mask to keep your nose and mouth covered when in public settings, including on public transportation and in transportation hubs such as airports and bus stations.
- Avoid close contact by staying at least 6 feet apart from anyone who is not in your travel group.
- Pack extra safety supplies, such as masks and hand sanitizer.
- Use contactless payment and check-ins whenever possible.

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