



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

LLOYD AYERS
COMMISSIONER
FIRE DEPARTMENT

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LICENSES AND INSPECTIONS

HOME WINTER FIRE SAFETY

December 2010

Fire Commissioner Lloyd Ayers and Commissioner Fran Burns of the Department of Licenses and Inspections wish all Philadelphia residents happy holidays and remind them to practice fire safety throughout the year, but especially during the Christmas and New Year holidays. The following are fire safety tips from the commissioners.

Smoke Alarms

Smoke alarms save lives and are required in all homes.

Install one on each level of a home and in the immediate vicinity of bedrooms on those floors.

Test smoke alarms weekly.

Replace the battery and clean them (vacuum or blow out dust) at least once a year.

Unable to afford them, call the Fire Department's smoke alarm hotline at 215-686-1176.

Carbon Monoxide

Carbon monoxide or CO is a deadly gas that is invisible and odorless.

All burning produces carbon monoxide gas, such as from heaters, fireplaces and vehicle exhaust.

Breathing CO gas can cause illness and lead to death if a person is not removed from the area.

Headache, nausea and drowsiness are symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Carbon monoxide alarms are required in all homes and small assisted living facilities.

Carbon monoxide alarms can be battery powered, plug in or hard wired.

Install at least one alarm in the immediate vicinity of bedrooms to alert sleeping occupants.

Replace the battery at least yearly.

Ensure heating equipment is properly vented to the outside to prevent a CO gas build up.

If a carbon monoxide alarm activates, open windows and doors, go outside and call a repairman.

Electrical Equipment and Wiring

Electricity flowing generates heat and overloaded wiring can cause a fire.

Do not overload circuits or extension cords.

Always use the proper size extension cord (14 or 12 gauge wiring).

Do not plug more than one appliance into an extension cord.

Use a power strip, which has a built in circuit breaker, when attaching more than one appliance.

Never run electrical cords under carpet or through doorways where they can be damaged.

Christmas Trees

Christmas trees dry out quickly inside a home and can catch fire if a heat source touches the tree.

Trees cut from their roots are only permitted in one- and two-family dwellings, not apartments.

Before installing a tree in a stand, cut 1/2 to 1 inch from the bottom of the trunk.

Use a stand with a water container and add water daily to keep some moisture in the tree.

Use only tree lights with a UL (Underwriters Laboratories) label.

Keep heat sources, such as candles, radiators or portable heaters away from the tree.

Turn off tree lights when leaving home.

Permanent Heating Equipment

Permanent heating equipment should be inspected each year by a qualified person.
Check flue pipes for holes. Holes will allow deadly carbon monoxide gas to leak into the house.
Check flue pipes and chimneys to ensure they are not clogged.
Keep combustible storage at least three feet from heaters.

Portable heaters

Portable heaters are not permitted to be used as permanent heating, only as a space heater.
Keep portable heaters at least three feet from combustible materials, such as beds or furniture.
Kerosene heaters are only permitted in one- and two-family homes, not in apartment buildings.
Refuel kerosene heaters outside and never use gasoline in place of kerosene as a fire will occur.

Cooking Appliances

Do not use an oven to heat a room as they are not designed for that use.
Never leave food cooking unattended.
Keep handles of pots and pans turned inward to prevent accidents.
In case of a fire shut off the appliance and cover pots or pans with a lid.

Candles

Candles are a common cause of fires in homes.
If used, place candles in a firm base with a lens to prevent tipping over or touching the flame.
Keep candles and matches to light them away from children and pets.
Extinguish candles when not in a room or leaving home.

Fireplaces

Fireplaces can cause fire if not used properly.
Before use open the chimney flue door to ensure proper ventilation and prevent CO gas build up.
Use only dry wood or fireplace logs for fuel to prevent excessive smoke and odors.
Place a fireplace screen in front of the fire to prevent sparks from igniting nearby combustibles.
Extinguish the fire when leaving home.
Have chimneys inspected and cleaned yearly to prevent creosote build up inside chimney walls.

Smoking

Keep cigarettes, matches and lighters away from children.
Keep cigarettes in an ash tray located in a place where it will not be knocked over.

Preplanning to be Prepared in the Event of a Fire

Fire safety should be practiced every day throughout the year.
Have a fire evacuation plan with primary and secondary routes out of the home.
Have a location outside where all family members will meet after evacuating the home.
Train children in fire safety and have them practice fire drills to ensure they know what to do.
Do not attempt to fight a fire, leave, close doors behind you and call the fire department (911).

Questions or to Obtain Smoke Alarms

For questions related to fires or fire safety call the Fire Prevention Division of the Fire Department at 215-686-1382. To obtain smoke alarms call the hotline at 215-686-1176.