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Sarasota County offers holiday fire safety tips

Holiday celebrations may put a home at risk for fire. To get through the holiday season safely, Sarasota County Fire Chief Kenneth Ellerbe suggests following these important safety tips:

- Place candles securely in non-tip candle holders and well away from anything that could catch fire. Don't leave candles unattended and blow them out before leaving the room or going to sleep.
- Use flame-retardant or non-combustible costumes and decorations.
- Supervise children and keep them away from matches, lighters and candles.
- When cooking, keep an eye on the range. Three of every 10 reported home fires start in the kitchen, more than any other place in the home. Remember too, drinking and medication can impair your judgment.
- Make sure there's a fire extinguisher in the kitchen and every member of the household knows how to use it.
- Provide smokers with large, deep, no-tip ashtrays. Empty ashtrays often and wet contents before dumping them. After a party, check cushions and furniture for smoldering cigarette butts.
- Buy a fresh tree that does not have shedding needles. Cut the trunk at an angle and install the tree in a large, deep non-tip stand well away from fireplaces, exits and heat sources. Ensure the tree has a constant supply of water – check it daily.
- Use a flame-retardant artificial tree if you are not using a live tree.
- Throw away light sets that have cracked or frayed cords or loose or damaged sockets.
- Unplug all decorative lights before leaving your home or going to bed.

For more information on keeping your family safe for the holidays, Call the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 and ask for the Emergency Services Public Education Office or visit the county's Web site at www.scgov.net.