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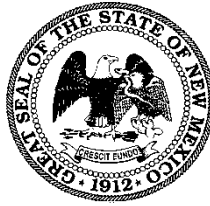
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NEWS RELEASE

State Fire Marshal, NFPA Remind Public To Deck the Halls with Fire Safety in Mind

December is One of the Leading Months for U.S. Home Fires

SANTA FE – With the winter holidays right around the corner, New Mexico State Fire Marshal John Standefer reminds New Mexicans that holiday decorations, Christmas trees, candles and cooking all contribute to an increased number of home fires during the month of December, making it one of the leading months for home fires nationwide.

“When you’re decking the halls this year, make sure to keep fire safety in mind,” Fire Marshal Standefer stated.

That’s also the main message behind Project Holiday, the National Fire Protection Association’s (NFPA) annual holiday fire safety campaign, which works to educate the public about the increased risk of home fires during the holiday season.

When decking the halls this holiday season, follow the NFPA’s simple safety tips to help keep you, your family and friends safer from fire.

“The holidays carry a host of traditions and festivities that people look forward to all year,” said Lorraine Carli, NFPA’s vice president for Outreach and Advocacy. “Unfortunately, many of these activities carry hidden dangers that present potential fire hazards.”

Consider these facts:

- **Holiday Cooking:** While cooking fires are the leading cause of U.S. home fires and injuries year-round, Christmas Day and Christmas Eve ranked second and third (after Thanksgiving) as the leading days for home cooking fires. On Christmas Day 2013, there was a 58 percent increase in the number of home cooking fires than on a typical day, and a 54 percent increase on Christmas Eve. Do not leave food on the stove unattended.

- **Christmas Trees:** Christmas tree fires are not common, but when they do occur, they’re much more likely to be deadly when compared to most other fires. One of every 31 reported home Christmas tree fires results in a death each year, compared to an annual average of one death per 144 total reported home fires.

- **Candles:** December is the peak time of year for home candle fires. The top four days for home candle fires are New Year’s Day, Christmas, New Year’s Eve and Christmas Eve. In December, 11 percent of home candle fires began with decorations, compared to four percent the rest of the year. More than half (56 percent) of home candle fires occur when something that can catch on fire is too close to the candle.

• **Holiday Decorations:** Between 2009 and 2013, U.S. fire departments responded to an annual average of 860 home fires that began with decorations (excluding Christmas trees). These fires caused an annual average of one civilian death, 41 injuries and \$13.4 million in direct property damage. One fifth (20 percent) of the decoration fires started in the kitchen; and one out of six (17 percent) started in the living room, family room or den.

• **Decorative Lights:** Inspect light strings and throw out any with frayed or cracked wires or broken sockets. When decorating, don't run more than three strings of lights end to end. Extension cords should be in good condition and UL-rated for indoor or outdoor use. Check outdoor receptacles to make sure the ground fault interrupters don't trip. If they trip repeatedly, that's a sign that they need to be replaced. When hanging lights outside, avoid using nails or staples, which can damage the wiring and increase the risk of a fire. Instead, use UL-rated clips or hangers.

• **Fireplaces:** Soot can harden on chimney walls as flammable creosote, so before the fireplace season begins, have your chimney inspected to see if it needs cleaning. Screen the fireplace to prevent embers from popping out onto the floor or carpet, and never use flammable liquids to start a fire in the fireplace. When cleaning out the fireplace, put embers in a metal container and set them outside to cool for 24 hours before disposal.

"A heat source too close to the tree causes roughly one in every four Christmas tree fires," Fire Marshal Standefer added. "One of every three home Christmas tree fires is caused by electrical problems. Be sure to unplug Christmas lights on the tree when you are out of the room, and ensure that your Christmas tree is properly hydrated. A dry tree can be engulfed in flames in less than 30 seconds."

"Fortunately, with some added awareness and by taking some simple safety precautions, people can ensure a safe and festive holiday season," said Carli. "That's what Project Holiday is all about."

Project Holiday offers a host of online tips and resources for consumers, along with tools and resources for local fire departments to promote the campaign and its safety messages in their communities. For additional holiday fire safety information, visit <http://www.nfpa.org/safety-information/for-consumers/seasonal/winter-holiday-safety>.

"We at the State Fire Marshal's Office wish all New Mexicans a very safe and happy holiday season," Fire Marshal Standefer concluded.

About the NFPA

Founded in 1896, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) is a global, nonprofit organization devoted to eliminating death, injury, property and economic loss due to fire, electrical and related hazards. NFPA delivers information and knowledge through more than 300 consensus codes and standards, research, training, education, outreach and advocacy; and by partnering with others who share an interest in furthering the NFPA mission. For more information, visit www.nfpa.org. All NFPA codes and standards can be viewed online for free at www.nfpa.org/freeaccess.

About the NMPRC

The NMPRC regulates public utilities, telecommunications companies and motor carriers operating in the State of New Mexico. It also administers the State Fire Marshal's Office, the New Mexico Firefighters Training Academy in Socorro, N.M., and the Pipeline Safety Bureau.

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