

Happy Holidays from the Houston Fire Department.



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CIVIC SAFETY CHAIN
NEIGHBORHOOD NEWSLETTER

Produced by the Houston Fire Department Public Affairs Office • 500 Jefferson • 16th Floor • Houston, Texas 77002 Holiday Special 2009, Vol. 5

HOLIDAY SAFETY ISSUE!

Home for the Holidays: Preparing for the holidays is a lot more than grocery shopping.

It's that time of year again. As we prepare for this holiday season with family and friends, make safety a priority.

Preparing your home for the holidays involves a lot more than just decorating. As the weather cools and we begin to turn on our heaters and furnaces, have you thought to have your heating system inspected? When was the last time it was inspected? Have you tested your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors recently? When was the last time you changed the batteries in these devices? Do you have a fire extinguisher in the house? Will you be burning candles this holiday? Do you have a fire escape plan in place? All these questions you should ask yourself as you get your home ready for your holiday guests.

Safety and security is the best gift you can give your family. It is also one of the least expensive.

Smoke Detectors- Remember, **"Working Smoke Detectors Save Lives"** Make sure your batteries are in place. Test them every month to ensure they are working and change the batteries every six months when you change your clock.

Fire Extinguishers- These are used more commonly in the kitchen. Keep a fully-charged fire extinguisher in your home at all times. Have the right type fire extinguisher (an ABC type works best for most home fires)

Carbon Monoxide- A carbon monoxide detector is another vital security device that can save your life by detecting the amount of CO in the air. Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless gas that can kill you before you know it is even in the house. CO is the by-product of incomplete combustion of fuels such as fire wood, kerosene, gasoline

and natural gas. The gas may originate from your furnace, hot water heater, bar-be-que grill or automobile.

Cooking Safety- Never leave a stove unattended while cooking. Watch the towels you use. You don't want to have anything near that could start a fire. Don't leave small children in the kitchen when preparing your holiday meal. More cooking tips including information on Turkey Fryers is available on page 2.

Candles- Never leave a burning candle unattended. Be sure to have the proper size candle holders for your candles and never burn them near combustible materials like drapes or curtains. Watch where they are located and ensure that younger children can not reach. Don't burn them more than four hours at a time.

Electrical Outlets- Don't overload an outlet. That is a hazard in itself. Be sure to have a power strip. It will shut off if it is on overload.

Space Heaters- "Space Heaters Need Space" - Give your space heater at least three feet of clearance around the unit. Always place your heater on the floor on a non-combustible surface. Never use extension cords with space heaters and never run the cords under your rugs. Never leave an operating space heater unattended.

Christmas Trees- The Houston Fire Department recommends that you purchase an artificial, fire-proof tree but if you buy a real tree, make sure it is as fresh as possible, not brown, no needles falling off etc. Keep the tree properly watered. Put a fresh diagonal cut, about an inch off the bottom, so water will flow through. Place in a secure base and keep water or wet sand in the base or use products designed to keep trees fresh. Make sure the tree is far enough away (at least 3 feet) from

any heat source (candles, fireplace etc.) and **never** try to burn the tree yourself in the fireplace for disposal. Dispose of your tree as soon as the season is over because a dried out tree is major fire hazard. If there is a service that will pick up your tree, store your tree away from your home and allow for pick up.

Lights- Christmas lights are beautiful and make any house warm and festive. When you purchase your lights make sure they are UL listed. When you hang your lights **NEVER** use more than 3 strands on a run (follow manufacturers instructions). Make sure there is no frayed wiring and it is preferable to use smaller bulbs with less heat. **Never** use the lights when your are not at home or when you are asleep. Purchase timers for extra security.

Fireplace- During the holiday season, many use their fireplaces not just to heat their homes but to make it more inviting for their guests. When using your fireplace, place a screen at the base of the fireplace and a flash arrester at the top of the chimney to keep sparks off the roof. Before building the fire make sure your damper is open and never use any paper or flammable liquids in the fireplace. Use aged wood and an approved product designed for igniting a fire in the fireplace or a gas fire log lighter that has been installed by a licensed plumber and purchased through a reliable company.

Holiday Driving Safety- **NEVER DRINK AND DRIVE!** Holidays are times for celebrating with your friends and family. But celebrate in moderation. If you drink, don't drive. There are many services available that will transport you for free. Or you can designate a driver or stay where you are. There are many options available. Remember, if you are drunk behind the wheel you risk more than just your life. For more home fire safety tips including creating your home fire escape plan, please visit our website: www.houstonfire.org



Is the Taste Worth the Danger?

With the holiday season fast approaching, the Houston Fire Department would like to remind you of the dangers of cooking with turkey fryers. Turkey fryers can create a delicious holiday treat for your family and friends but without proper precautions, can become a dangerous and deadly disaster. Follow each of these recommended safety tips when using a turkey fryer so you can have a safe and tasty holiday season.

- Turkey fryers are **EXTREMELY DANGEROUS!**
- **ALWAYS** use turkey fryers outdoors away from anything that can burn.
- **ALWAYS** use the fryer outdoors on a level surface to avoid tipping
- **NEVER** use them on wooden decks or in garages
- **NEVER** leave the fryer unattended even for a second
- **NEVER** let children or pets near the fryer
- **The oil will remain dangerously hot hours after use**
- **NEVER** overfill a fryer
- The turkey must be **completely thawed before being placed in the hot oil**
- **Keep an all-purpose fire extinguisher nearby** and use heavy duty pot holders.
- **NEVER** use water to extinguish the fire

You Will Need

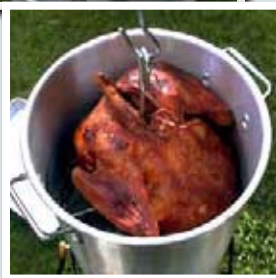
- In addition to a completely thawed turkey, you'll need a 40 or 60 quart pot with basket or turkey frying hardware, plus a propane gas tank and burner, a candy/deep fry thermometer, a meat thermometer and lots of oil. Use oils that have a high smoke point, such as corn, peanut or canola oils.
- As far as the turkey itself goes, smaller birds work better for frying. Try not to go over 15 pounds.

Before You Fry-

These tips will help to prevent oil overflow

- Before beginning, (and before you even season or marinate your turkey) determine the amount of oil you'll need by placing the turkey in the basket (or on the hanger, depending on the type of fryer you are using) and putting it in the pot. Add water until it reaches about two inches above the turkey. Remove the turkey and note the water level by using a ruler to measure the distance from the top of the pot to the surface of the water. Remove the water and thoroughly dry the pot. Now add enough oil to equal what the water level was without the turkey in the pot.

Remember: There are many local grocery stores and other businesses that prepare fried turkeys so you don't have to. Always practice these and other safe cooking habits.



Using a turkey fryer improperly can create a deadly disaster in no time.



morecookingsafetytips

It is better to prevent a fire than to deal with one.

In The Kitchen- Careless cooking is the #1 cause of residential fires and unattended cooking is the primary cause of kitchen fires!

- Turn pot handles away from the front of the stove and never position them over another burner
- Make sure pot holders are not too close to the stove
- **NEVER** leave cooking food unattended
- Wear short sleeves or tight-fitting long sleeves
- Shield yourself from scalding steam when lifting lids from hot pots
- Keep broilers, ovens, stove tops and exhaust ducts free from grease
- If there is a fire in the oven-Turn off the oven and keep the oven door closed
- Use an ABC fire extinguisher, baking soda or a tight-fitting pot lid, **NEVER** flour or water, to extinguish a kitchen fire

Barbeque Pits- Keep The Fire In The Pit!

- When starting your barbeque use charcoal lighter fluid. **NEVER** Use Gasoline!
- Have a fire extinguisher or charged garden hose near while the fire is burning
- Use long handle barbeque tools when grilling outdoors
- Check the pit frequently
- Only use barbeque pits outdoors
- Soak the coals in water before disposing of them
- The Houston Fire codes prohibits the use of barbeque pits within 10 feet of roofs, combustible walls and other combustible materials.
- Fines start at \$250.00 for violations

Gas Grills- Gas Grills Are NOT Foolproof!

- Check your gas connections and tank regularly. Use a light soap & water solution to check for leaks
- Make sure there are no clogged lines or burners
- **ALWAYS** have the grill open when starting the fire. The accumulation of gas can explode when exposed to flame
- If the fire does not ignite when you press the ignitor button, turn off the gas and let the remaining gas clear before restarting
- When you are finished cooking, turn off the gas at the tank and the controls
- **NEVER** store gas cylinders in your home or garage.
- **ALWAYS** store them outside.
- **ALWAYS** use gas grills outdoors



Accessing Public Records:

If you have had to use the HFD Fire Service or EMS you can request a copy of your Fire/EMS records.

To receive a copy of a Structure Fire Record you will need to provide:

- Date and time of incident
- Location of fire (street and block number), cross street if possible
- Owner's name and address
- Self-addressed stamped envelope
- Structure Fire Records cost \$5.00

To receive a copy of an Auto Fire Record you will need to provide:

- Date and time of incident
- Location of fire (street and block number), cross street if possible
- Owner's name and address
- Make, model, license and Vehicle Identification number (VIN)
- Self-addressed stamped envelope
- Auto Fire Records cost \$5.00

To receive a copy of an EMS Ambulance Report you will need to provide:

- Name of Patient
- Patient's age
- Social Security number
- Location of incident
- Time and date of incident
- Hospital where patient was transported
- Number of any transporting patient
- Any other information you feel is helpful
- HIPAA Compliant Medical Authorization
- Self-addressed stamped envelope
- EMS Ambulance Reports cost \$6.00

Fire and EMS Records accepts cash, checks or money orders payable to:
The City of Houston

For more information please call the HFD Records Division at
713-495-4292

For billing questions call the billing company ACS at **713-917-3170**

Working Smoke Detectors Test SAVE LIVES! Yours Today!

HFD First Aid Tip of the Month



“Cold or H1N1: How Can You Tell?”

Do you know how to tell the difference between a cold & the H1N1 Flu?

Here is a comparison of the major symptoms of each.

SYMPTOM	COLD	H1N1 FLU
Fever	Fever is rare with a cold.	Fever is usually present with the flu in up to 80% of all flu cases. A temperature of 100°F or higher for 3 to 4 days is associated with the flu.
Coughing	A hacking, productive (mucus-producing) cough is often present with a cold.	A non-productive (non-mucus producing) cough is usually present with the flu (sometimes referred to as dry cough).
Aches	Slight body aches and pains can be part of a cold.	Severe aches and pains are common with the flu.
Stuffy Nose	Stuffy nose is commonly present with a cold and typically resolves spontaneously within a week.	Stuffy nose is not commonly present with the flu.
Chills	Chills are uncommon with a cold.	60% of people who have the flu experience chills.
Fatigue	Fatigue is fairly mild with a cold.	Fatigue is moderate to severe with the flu.
Sneezing	Sneezing is commonly present with a cold.	Sneezing is not common with the flu.
Sudden Symptoms	Cold symptoms tend to develop over a few days.	The flu has a rapid onset within 3-6 hours. The flu hits hard and includes sudden symptoms like high fever, aches and pains.
Headache	A headache is fairly uncommon with a cold.	A headache is very common with the flu, present in 80% of flu cases.
Sore Throat	Sore throat is commonly present with a cold.	Sore throat is not commonly present with the flu.
Chest Discomfort	Chest discomfort is mild to moderate with a cold.	Chest discomfort is often severe with the flu.

Source: Blue Cross Blue Shield



KNOW THE SIGNS. STOP THE CRIMES.

Arson is a very serious, costly & potentially deadly crime that can victimize anyone, anywhere at any time.

The Houston Heights area has been plagued by a series of arson fires over the last few months. As the HFD Arson Investigators continue their search for the arsonist, we would like to remind you that there are steps you can take to reduce your risk of becoming a victim of this heinous crime.

Report any suspicious activity to the Houston Police Department at 713-884-3131.

If you have any information regarding a fire that has been deliberately set or any criminal behavior, contact Crimestoppers at 713-222-TIPS (8477)

If you suspect a fire has been deliberately set contact HFD Arson at 713-865-9000

There are many hazards and situations that can occur in any neighborhood, apartment or condominium complex.

- 1. Are any security/entry gates working properly?
- 2. Are there any vacant homes/units that may be used by trespassers?
- 3. Is the neighborhood/complex clean of debris?

• In an apartment complex or gated neighborhood, the security gates are the first line of defense against unwanted intruders. If they are malfunctioning, report them to the apartment management or homeowners association for repair.

• Look for signs of someone inhabiting vacant homes/units. Signs include broken windows or doors that have been pried open. Report any suspicious activity to the homeowners association or apartment management and HPD.

• Overflowing dumpsters and areas that have collected trash are favorite targets of arsonists. Properly store any flammable liquids away from the dumpsters. Keep your areas clean.

• Check and repair the exterior lighting. A well-illuminated area can be a strong deterrent to criminals. Leave your exterior lights on at night.

• Start a Neighborhood Watch program.

• Secure your car a night. Make sure it is locked and that all of your valuables have been removed.

• **Help Us Help You!** These tips can help prevent a tragedy from happening but it is up to you to be aware of your environment and the people in it.



The Houston Fire Department's Annual Toy Drive has begun!

SHARE THE JOY, SHARE A TOY!

The Houston Fire Department is collecting toys to help make this holiday season a joyous one for disadvantaged children in the Houston area.

Between December 2 -18th, you can drop a new, unwrapped toy by any of our HFD Fire Stations.

For a complete list of fire stations and their locations, please visit www.houstonfire.org.

For information on toy donations call: HFD Public Affairs 713-495-7900

Due to the tremendous demand for toys, we cannot accept any clothing donations.

"ADOPT-A-FIRE STATION"

The "Adopt-A-Fire Station" Program was created to give citizens and civic, professional and business groups a formal vehicle by which they may make tangible donations to the fire stations of their choice.

The program, jointly administered by the Houston Fire Department and the General Services Department, involves directing donor materials and services to the fire station the donor desires "to adopt." The program does not replace the city's established fire station restoration program currently administered by the General Services Department. Rather, it serves as a supplement.

For more information please visit: <http://www.houstontx.gov/fire/community/adopt.html> or call 713-495-7906



Did You Remember To Change The Batteries In Your Smoke Detector When You Changed Your Clock?

If Not...DO IT TODAY!



"SAFE HOUSE"

The Houston Fire Department would like to remind parents that we are here to help keep kids safe.

Just as there is a church in every neighborhood to support it's residents, there is a fire house nearby when someone feels threatened by a stranger, friend or family member.

All Fire Stations are "Safe Houses," places for both children and adults to come to if they feel they are in immediate danger (such as being followed by another person or vehicle).

Houston Firefighters will make sure the person is okay and contact the local authorities. We encourage parents to tell children that this is a "safe" place they can go to if they are lost or feel they are in danger from a family member, friend or stranger. The firefighters will keep them safe until the parents and police can assist the child.

Save This Date! April 5, 2010

6th Annual Houston Firefighter's Charity Golf Classic

Benefiting The Houston Firefighters Protection Fund

Southwyck Golf Club

2901 Clubhouse Drive, Pearland, Texas

Play Begins at 8:00am

2-Person Scramble

Tournament Sponsors Needed!

Contact: Kenyada Parker

713-495-7924 for more information or to become a tournament sponsor.

E-mail: kenyada.parker@cityofhouston.net

