

Thurston County Development Services Seasonal Fire Safety



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Fourth of July

Yes, people can die from fireworks and the fires they cause.

Most fireworks related fires occur in dry brush and grass, but houses can be destroyed or damaged on this holiday.

Nationally, more than \$36 million in property is damaged each year due to fireworks. Most fireworks burn injuries involve children. These are usually burns to the hands and eyes causing vision impairment and disfiguring scars. Sparklers are the biggest danger to children. A tip temperature at the end of the sparkler reaches 1800 degrees Fahrenheit and can easily cause a burn.

Some people think that just because some fireworks are legal in some states, they are more safe. The largest share of fireworks injuries are caused by Class C fireworks, the kind that are legal in many states.

Leave fireworks to the professionals.

Restrictions on fireworks are for a good cause. No matter how small or large a fireworks may be, it is a potential fire starter. But it is still possible to celebrate and enjoy the holiday. Families can consult the newspaper or local activity calendar and attend one of several approved, licensed fireworks displays.

Halloween

Halloween is meant to be spooky and fun but it's also important to keep it safe for your children, your friends and you.

A simple ghost costume made from an ordinary bed sheet can be consumed by flames if ignited. Purchase only flame-retardant costumes and masks. And be sure costumes fit properly to prevent tripping and falling. Masks should allow full vision.

If trick-or-treating door-to-door, wear something reflective, carry a flashlight and travel in groups for safety. Keep well off the streets and remove masks before crossing the streets. Better yet, have a spooky party and stay in with your friends.

Check all treats carefully before eating them. Report anything suspicious. Instead of a candle to light a jack-o-lantern, use a small flashlight or a liquid light that glows for several hours after you bend it.

Never use combustible materials in a haunted house, especially styrofoam and other plastics, gauze type materials and other loose flammables such as leaves and papers. These materials can quickly cause the spread of fire. This situation can be especially dangerous when the fire starts in a confined space such as the dark interior of a haunted house display.

Christmas Trees

A dried out Christmas tree can be totally consumed by fire in less than 30 seconds.

Christmas trees that are not kept moist can present a very serious fire hazard. Most trees sold have been cut out of the state and have been drying out since they were harvested, which could have been as late as mid-November. Take special precautions when buying your Christmas tree. Trees with brown shedding needles should be rejected. If the tree looks green and fresh, take a long needle and bend it between your thumb and forefinger. If it snaps, the tree is too dry. Look for trees with needles that bend. When the trunk of a tree is bounced on the ground, a shower of falling needles shows that tree is dry.

When you bring a tree home, cut about an inch off the end of the trunk. This will remove the dried end and allow the tree to absorb water. Make checkerboard cuts into the base at different angles to make a greater surface for water absorption.

Always turn off lights on trees and other decorations when you go to bed or leave your home. A short circuit in any of this equipment could cause a fire. Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. Damaged insulation in lighting on a metallic tree could cause the entire tree to be charged with electricity. To avoid this danger, use colored spotlights above or beside a metal tree, never fastened onto it.

Keep children away from light sets and electrical decorations. All lights present a hazard for curious kids. When you are stringing the lights on your tree, be careful how you place them. Keep all bulbs turned away from gifts and paper ornaments. Lights in windows can cause curtains and drapes to ignite.

- Never use candles on a Christmas tree. Even unlit candles can trigger an innocent curiosity.
- Use only lights that are UL/FM approved and for interior use.
- Do not overload circuits or extension cords.
- Be careful not to use tree lights with cracked or broken wiring. Inspect all lights and cords before using them. Use only laboratory approved lights. Don't overload circuits.
- Do not place lights or candles near anything that can easily catch on fire. Curtains, furniture and bedding are all common sources for the start of a fire.
- Turn tree lights off before going to bed or leaving home.
- Put candles in non-flammable, sturdy holders or candlesticks. Do not place them where they can easily be knocked over, in windows, or near exits.

<http://www.nfpa.org/Home/index.asp> (LINK)

<http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/keepsafe> (LINK)