



**American  
Red Cross**

Pikes Peak Chapter

Pikes Peak Chapter  
1040 South 8<sup>th</sup> Street  
Colorado Springs, CO 80906  
www.pparc.org

*News Release*  
**NEWS RELEASE**

**Contact:** Jennifer Mariano  
**Phone:** 719-785-2711  
**Cell:** 719-641-6365  
**Email:** jmariano@pparc.org

## **INCLUDE FIRE SAFETY ON YOUR HOLIDAY WISH LIST**

### ***American Red Cross Offers Safety Tips to Prevent Holiday Home Fires***

**Colorado Springs, CO, December 18, 2008**—As the holiday season moves into full swing, the Pikes Peak Chapter American Red Cross urges families to follow simple safety tips to keep the season merry and to prevent holiday fires. During the winter holiday season the incidence and severity of home fires dramatically increases. In fact, according to the U.S. Fire Administration, each year nearly 47,000 fires occur nationally during the holidays claiming more than 500 lives, causing more than 2,200 injuries, and costing \$554 million in property damage. Many of these fires are caused by home heating sources, unattended cooking, and candles.

“Many home fires can be prevented, and that’s what makes this type of disaster so devastating,” said David Just, CEO of the Pikes Peak Chapter. “The holidays can be a time of celebration, and by following a few quick safety tips you can help to prevent your family’s festivities from being disrupted by a fire. Making safety an important part of your holiday preparations can help you do this.”

To prevent holiday home fires, the Red Cross recommends keeping all potential fuel sources, including decorations and evergreen trees and wreaths, at least three feet from heat sources such as candles, heat vents, fireplaces and radiators. In addition, holiday lights and candles need to be turned off or extinguished before leaving the room or going to bed, and especially before leaving home. If you are entertaining guests, designate a responsible family member to walk around your home ensuring that candles and smoking materials are properly extinguished once guests leave.

“Last holiday season the Pikes Peak Chapter responded to 15 home fires and provided the families with immediate emergency assistance including shelter, food, counseling and more,” said Mr. Just. “In addition to following safety precautions with holiday lights and decorations, this is a great time for families to make sure that their smoke alarms are functioning properly and practice their home fire escape plan.”

At a minimum, smoke alarms need to be installed outside of each sleeping area and on each level of your home. If you sleep with closed doors, install alarms inside sleeping areas too. Use the test button to test each smoke alarm once a month. All smoke alarm batteries need to be replaced once a year. Fire escape plans should include at least two escape routes for every room in the home. Also chose a convenient meeting place at a safe distance from your home. Practice your escape plan at least twice a year with all family members.

The Red Cross recommends following the below tips to help prevent holiday home fires:

### **Christmas Tree Care**

- Purchase flame retardant metallic or artificial trees.
- If you purchase a real tree, make sure that it has fresh, green needles that aren't easily broken. Keep live trees as moist as possible by giving them plenty of water.
- Use a sturdy tree stand designed not to tip over.
- Keep trees at least three feet away from heat sources, including fireplaces, portable heaters, radiators, heat vents and candles.
- Make sure that any light strings or other decorations for the tree are in good condition and follow manufacturer's instructions for their use. Do not use anything with frayed electrical cords.
- Be careful not to drop or flick cigarette ashes near a tree.
- Never put tree branches or needles in a fireplace or wood burning stove.
- Safely dispose of trees as they become dry and needles begin to drop.
- Dispose of trees through recycling centers or community pick-up services. Dried-out trees should not be left at home or in a garage, or placed against the home or garage.

### **Holiday Lights and Decorations**

- Always unplug tree and holiday lights before leaving home or going to bed.
- Inspect holiday lights each year for frayed wires, bare spots, broken or cracked sockets, and excessive kinking or wear.
- Avoid overloading electrical outlets by not linking more than three light strands.
- Use decorations that are flame-resistant or flame-retardant.
- Place decorations at least three feet away from fireplaces, portable heaters, radiators, heat vents and candles.

### **Holiday Candles**

- Remember that lit candles are fire. Always extinguish candles before leaving the room or going to bed.
- Never use lit candles to decorate a tree.
- Keep candles at least 12 inches away from trees, evergreens, holiday decorations, and other items that can catch on fire like clothing, papers and curtains.
- Use candle holders that are sturdy, won't tip over easily, are made from a material that cannot burn, and are large enough to collect dripping wax.
- Place candles only where they cannot be reached or easily knocked over by children and pets.
- Consider using battery-operated "flameless" candles that are scented and have a flickering affect.

The Red Cross depends on the generous support of the community to respond to our neighbors who are affected by home fires. You can help the Red Cross continue to be ready to respond and help fire victims by making a financial contribution to Pikes Peak Chapter today. To make a financial donation, visit [www.pparc.org](http://www.pparc.org), call 719-632-3563, or mail a check to 1040 S. 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Colorado Springs, CO 80905.