

FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE OFFERS HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS

Each year, fires occurring during the holiday season injure 2,600 individuals and cause more than \$930 million in damage. There are simple life-saving steps you can take to ensure a safe and happy holiday. By following some of the following precautionary tips, individuals can greatly reduce their chances of becoming holiday fire casualties.

According to Kellen Tarkington of the Doña Ana County Fire and Emergency Service Department, smoke detectors are the first and best line of defense for families. He said all homes should have smoke detectors installed, and he said it's critical that the batteries be checked twice annually and changed as needed.

- Christmas trees
 - Live trees should be checked for freshness. Keep the tree stand filled with water. Do not place the tree near a heat source such as heaters or fireplaces. A live tree should not be up for more than two weeks
 - Artificial trees should be certified as fire-resistant
 - Decorations should be nonflammable
- Holiday lights
 - Lights should be inspected for frayed wires, bare spots, gaps in insulation, broken or cracked sockets, and excessive wear
 - Do not use outside lights for indoor use and vice versa
 - Do not overload electrical outlets
- Candles
 - Candles should not be left unattended
 - Use stable holders
 - Never put lit candles on a tree
- Fireplaces
 - Do not burn wrapping paper in the fireplace
 - Remove all decorations before starting fireplace
 - Use a fireplace screen
 - Have your chimney cleaned by a professional
- Turkey fryers
 - Turkey fryers should only be used outdoors and a safe distance from any building
 - Do not use on top of wooden decks or in garages
 - Make sure fryer is on a flat surface to prevent tipping
 - Never leave the fryer unattended
 - Do not overfill the fryer with oil

- Oil and water do not mix, so make sure turkey is completely thawed, and be careful with marinades
- Keep a fire extinguisher nearby
- Do not allow children or pets near the fryer
- Do not use water to put out an oil fire.

Reporters seeking more information or interviews may call county Public Information Director Jess Williams at (575) 525-5801.