



Holiday Public Safety Tips



Fire Prevention

Unfortunately, as the years pass, we see some very tragic events inside people's celebrations. It is hard to remember a Christmas Season where we have not responded to at least one of the following tragedies:

- Candles are very dangerous. From the momentarily unattended child that is fascinated by the flame and makes a mistake with it, to the fact that they are forgotten, burn down to nothing, and catch their surroundings on fire. Of course, this is only discovered after the fire cause is determined, because most of the interior of the home and its contents are destroyed. Remember that items that are not made to contain candles are more likely to fail and cause problems. Consider the new light emitting diode (LED) button-battery candles instead of "playing with fire".
- Natural trees inside your home are like placing kindling right in the middle of all those gifts you bought, and in the midst of the ones you love. You'll find most firefighters only use artificial trees because of what they have seen in the aftermath of a Christmas tree fire in someone's home. If you "must" have a natural tree, try to keep it in your home a short amount of time, and tend to its hydration daily. A dry Christmas tree is unstoppable once it ignites, and it produces so much heat that the rest of the interior of your home is going to be destroyed, if not your home also. There are fewer scenes more sad than seeing the burned interior of a home where fire has consumed an entire family's pile of Christmas gifts there under the smoldering tree.
- Exterior decorations are part of the season, but they make you susceptible to falls. Broken bones and bruises are some of the least injuries we have seen. Last year, a McKinney firefighter was putting lights on a home's exterior off duty, and fell to his death. Internal injuries to the body and especially the head are usually the cause. Prevent this from happening by using the proper ladder, limiting your reach off the ladder, and being sure it is set properly on solid (not wet) ground. Work on the outside of your home using a ladder is a two-person job for safety reasons.
- The inside of our homes is usually transfigured into a winter wonderland as part of this key celebration. Falls from over-reaching is common, but is especially common when chairs and stools are being used. Invest in the solid step-ladders that have a grab rail at the top. You'll increase your safety while putting up your decorations, and can use it year round for your other household projects.
- Electricity makes our Christmases bright! It can also cause shocks, electrocution, and fires. Objectively look at those decorations and lights you have been using for years . . . they are probably cracked, worn, and due replacement. Use that as an opportunity to upgrade to the newer more energy efficient decorations! Be especially cautious with outdoor electricity. If your exterior outlets are not the ground fault interruption (GFI) type, it would be good to replace them. Watch for worn wires on metal surfaces,

especially outdoors around the moist earth. This is a life safety concern that you should take seriously.

- There's nothing like a fire in the fireplace when the whole family is in for the season. Many times, it is the only time during the year we use that fireplace! Realize that some of our homes shift and settle during the year, and a crack in the fireplace chimney or flue could have opened up. Check your fireplace annually for a clear, uncompromised channel for that heat, smoke, and any wayward embers. You may be hosting a squirrel or a bird's nest and not even know it! Be sure the screen on top of your chimney is intact. It not only keeps out those uninvited guests that want to house in your chimney, but it also acts as a spark arrestor to protect your roof, yard, fence, and everything else combustible in the area. Use artificial logs sparingly. The heat production on some of the commercially available manufactured logs exceeds the maximum temperature your flue can handle if you put more than one in there at a time.
- While you are asleep with those visions of sugar plums dancing in your head, lots of carbs and tryptophan from the turkey and dressing on board, be sure that you are protecting the most precious thing we celebrate this time of year: Life itself! You should have replaced your smoke detector batteries when we changed our clocks on November 1st . . . if you didn't, do it now. While you are at it, give yourself a gift of a quality carbon monoxide detector (spend enough to get one with a constant digital readout/display). Even all electric homes that have attached garages should invest in these detectors above the obvious need for a smoke alarm.

Don't despair! With a little attention to these small details and the developing of good habits, your family can celebrate the season the way it was intended to be celebrated: with peace, love, fellowship, safety, and a great sense of security. Feel free to call us at Wylie Fire Rescue if you have any questions or want us to drop by to check on anything . . . we're always here for you! 972-442-8110 during Business Hours, 972-442-8171 for non-emergency information after hours, weekends, and holidays.

Crime Prevention

The holiday season should be a time of great joy as we celebrate and share gifts with our friends and loved ones. Unfortunately, it can be a time when crime becomes more prevalent. Statistics nationwide reveal that people are especially vulnerable to burglary, theft and other crime during the hectic holiday season. The Wylie Police Department would like to offer the following safety tips to help you avoid becoming a victim of crime. Taking an extra measure of precaution could make this season of holidays safer and happier.

Shopping:

- Be aware of your surroundings. Walk confidently with your head up and stay in well-lit and well-traveled areas.
- Pay attention to people walking in front of you and behind you.
- Be aware of pickpockets and purse-snatchers. Don't overburden yourself with packages.

- Be extra careful with purses and wallets. Carry a purse close to your body not dangling by the straps. Make sure purses are closed and fastened. Put wallets in an inside coat or front pants pocket
- When using public washrooms and store dressing rooms, you are very vulnerable to a thief. Try to avoid putting your purse on hooks or door handles
- Coordinate shopping trips with a friend or relative
- Be as discreet as possible with your carried cash. Whenever possible use credit cards or checks instead of cash. Never carry large amounts of money.
- When arriving at the mall, attempt to park close to entrance doors and in a well-lighted area. Always close your car windows and lock the doors
- Cars can be easy targets for criminals. Store all gifts and packages in the trunk. This also applies to car phones, purses and briefcases. Nothing of value should be left in plain view
- When returning to your car, have your key ready and avoid fumbling with your packages. Stay alert for anyone lingering in the area. If you have suspicions, return to the store and request an escort. Lock your car doors immediately after entering.
- If you take packages to your car and plan on returning to the store or mall, drive your car to a new location in the parking lot. Criminals may be on the lookout for unsuspecting holiday shoppers who simply drop their purchases into the trunk and return to keep shopping.
- Use caution at ATM machines. Use them during daylight hour.

Out for the Evening:

- Turn on lights, a radio or TV so it appears that someone is home.
- Unplug holiday decorative lights before going out for the evening.
- Lock all doors and windows when you leave, even if it's only for a few minutes.
- Do not display gifts through your living room window.

Traveling During the Holidays:

- Use automatic timers for lights to give the appearance of occupancy. Ask a trusted neighbor to watch your home. Have someone pick up your mail and newspapers or suspend delivery.
- Avoid displaying gifts and presents where they can be seen from the outside of your home. After presents are opened, don't let your outdoor trash receptacles announce your new acquisitions. Record serial and model numbers of gifts as soon as you receive them.
- Protect your holiday mail by emptying your mailbox as soon as possible.
- Be a good neighbor, call police if you observe people knocking on doors in your neighborhood without legitimate reasons.
- If a stranger comes to your door...beware. Criminals sometimes pose as couriers delivering gifts. It's not uncommon for the unscrupulous to take advantage of the

generosity of others during the holidays by soliciting door-to-door for non-existent charities.