

Prevent Candle Fires as You Celebrate this Month

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Across the nation, December is the peak month for home candle fires, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). Between 2015 and 2019, U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated 7,400 home structure fires that were started by candles per year.

Candle fires also happen in our fire district throughout December.

One reason for all these candles fires is the plethora of holidays in December that may utilize candles for secular and sacred ceremonies such as Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Chanukah, Kwanzaa, Junkanoo, Ōmisoka, Santa Lucia Day, Mōdraniht, New Year's Eve, Hogmanay, Winter Solstice, Yule, Yalda, Soyal, Bodhi Day, Epiphany (Three Kings Day), Krampusnacht, Pancha Ganapati, and Saturnalia.

Other contributing reasons are connected to how we use candles. We at South Metro Fire Rescue prefer flameless candles. If you are using traditional candles, these tips can help you and your family have a safer holiday:

- Use candle holders that are sturdy and won't tip over easily.
- Put candle holders on a sturdy, noncombustible, and uncluttered surface.
- Burning handheld candles should not be passed from one person to another at any time.
- When lighting candles at a candle-lighting service, have the person with the unlit candle dip their candle into the flame of the lit candle.
- Lit candles should not be placed in windows where a blind or curtain could catch fire.
- Candles placed on or near tables, altars, or shrines, must be watched by an adult.
- If a candle must burn continuously, be sure it is enclosed in a glass container and placed in a sink, on a metal tray, or in a deep basin filled with water.
- Light candles carefully. Keep your hair and any loose clothing away from the flame.
- Don't burn a candle all the way down. Put it out before it gets too close to the holder or container.
- Never use a candle if oxygen is used in the home.

Candles come in two varieties: mesas (wider than they are tall) and buttes (taller than they are wide). Mesas resist tipping and burn longer than buttes.

If a candle does cause a fire, leave the building and call 911. Our stations are fully staffed with firefighters ready to help you each day of the year including all holidays.

If you have questions about any safety topics, please visit www.southmetro.org or find our agency on social media.