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## FIRE DISTRICT OF SUN CITY WEST

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## NEWSRELEASE

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### A SEASON OF SHARING IN FIRE SAFETY

(SUN CITY WEST, AZ), (NOVEMBER 13), 2008 – The winter holidays are a time for family, friends and fun... but don't let the hustle and bustle of the season take away your attention to safety. Each year fires occurring during the holiday season claim the lives of over 400 people, injure 1,650 more, and cause over \$990 million in damage, according to the United States Fire Administration (USFA). As in every season, make sure all of your home's smoke alarms are in working order, test them monthly, keep them clean and equipped with fresh batteries. Know when and how to call for help. And remember to practice your home escape plan. Keep your holidays happy by following some simple safety tips!

#### **Holiday Trees**

Special fire safety precautions need to be taken when keeping a live tree in the house. A burning tree can rapidly fill a room with fire and deadly gases.

- Choose a fresh tree where the needles are green and hard to pull back from the branches. Avoid old trees that can be identified by bouncing the tree trunk on the ground. If many needles fall off, the tree has been cut too long, has probably dried out, and is a fire hazard.
- Place the tree in a sturdy stand, and keep the stand filled with water at all times.
- Place the tree away from all heat sources, including fireplaces and vents. The heat will dry out the tree causing it to be more easily ignited by heat, flame or sparks.

- Dispose of the tree properly by taking it to a recycling center or having it hauled away.
- If you are using a metallic or artificial tree, make sure it is flame retardant.

## **Lighting**

Do not leave holiday lights on unattended.

- Inspect holiday lights for broken or cracked sockets, frayed wires, bare spots, loose connections, and excessive kinking or wear. Make sure to periodically check the wires – they should not be warm to the touch. Discard all damaged sets.
- Don't overload electrical outlets. Do not link more than three light strands, unless the directions indicate it is safe.
- Only use indoor lights - indoors, and outdoor lights - outdoors!
- Always unplug all lights before leaving home or going to sleep.
- Use only lighting listed by an approved testing laboratory like UL (Underwriters Laboratories).

## **Candles**

Do not go near a tree with an open flame – candles, lighters or matches.

- Keep candles away from decorations.
- Place them in stable, non-combustible holders and place them where they cannot be easily knocked down.
- Never leave lit candles unattended.
- Don't leave children unattended in a room with lit candles.

## **Cooking**

- Never leave cooking unattended. If you leave the kitchen while cooking, turn off the stove.
- Turn pot and pan handles toward the center of the stove, and out of the reach of children.
- If a pan or skillet catches fire, slide the lid or larger pan over the skillet and turn the stove off.

- Keep a fire extinguisher within reach and know how to use it.

### **Holiday extras**

- Have plenty of non-alcoholic drinks available at gatherings.
- Never drink and drive, and never get into a car if the driver's been drinking. Choose a designated driver who will not drink.
- Use seat belts and child safety seats in your car.
- Be a safe pedestrian: use crosswalks; make eye contact with drivers and make sure they see you.
- Do not randomly discharge firearms. It is not only dangerous, it is illegal.
- Keep portable heaters at least three feet away from holiday trees, decorations, furniture, and other flammable materials.
- Have your home furnace inspected prior to cold weather use.
- Watch your children around all sources of water! Kids can drown during the winter months, too!

**Dial 9-1-1 for all emergencies.**

For more information call the Fire District at (623) 584-3500 or visit our website at

[www.scwfire.org](http://www.scwfire.org).

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