

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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November 20, 2020

The DeKalb Fire Department is pleased to announce its 24th annual **Red Wreath Program**. Since 1986, DeKalb Fire Department has displayed lighted wreaths as a visual reminder of home fire safety during the holiday season.

On Thanksgiving Day, DeKalb firefighters will display wreaths with all red bulbs outside each fire station. If an emergency fire incident related to the holiday season occurs, firefighters will replace a red bulb with a white bulb. This display will continue through January 1, 2021. Our community's goal is to keep all the wreaths red.

Each time drivers and pedestrians observe the red wreaths at fire stations, they are reminded to celebrate the holidays safely and **Keep the Wreaths Red!**

The leading causes of holiday fires include cooking, candles, electrical short circuits in decorative lights, combustible holiday decorations, as well as fires in chimneys or caused by heating appliances, including electric and kerosene space heaters. Please see the attached list of safety recommendations from the National Fire Protection Agency.

Last year, DeKalb's red wreaths were displayed for 39 days and no fire incidents related to the holiday season occurred. During that 34-day period, the DeKalb Fire Department responded to 553 requests for emergency services, including 8 fires.

If you have any questions about the Red Wreath Program or would like any information about fire safety, please contact the DeKalb Fire Department at 748-8460.

Electrical

- Avoid using extension cords. If an extension cord is required, ensure no insulation is cracked/split and appropriate grounding plugs are in place.
- Keep wiring out of walkways and places where it may become pinched or worn.
- Check electrical wiring often for possible problems.

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Cooking

- Be alert when cooking!
- Stay in the kitchen while cooking on the stovetop to keep an eye on the food. Keep a lid beside the stovetop while using it.
- Stay in your home while cooking.
- Use a timer and check frequently on cooking food.
- Keep wood utensils, oven mitts, towels, food packaging, and other items that could catch fire away from the stovetop.
- Be sure electric cords from appliances do not dangle within easy reach of a child.
- Keep matches and utility lighters out of the reach of children.
- Keep knives out of the reach of children.
- Keep children at least three (3) feet from the stove and away from hot food and liquids. Steam or splash from liquids can cause serious burns.

Decorating

- Be careful with holiday decorations. Choose flame resistant or flame retardant decorations.
- Keep lit candles away from decorations and other things that can burn. Never leave burning candles unattended. Keep children and pets away from lit candles.
- Use lights that have the label of a recognized testing laboratory. Some lights are only for indoor or outdoor use.
- Replace strings of lights with worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections. Read manufacturer's instructions for number of light strands to connect.
- Use clips, not nails, to hang lights, so cords are not damaged.
- Keep decorations away from windows and doors.

Christmas Trees

- Choose a tree with fresh, green needles that do not fall off when touched.
- Before placing the tree in the stand, cut two inches (2") from the trunk base.
- Make sure the tree is at least three feet (3') away from heat sources, including fireplaces, radiators, candles, heat vents, and lights.
- Make sure the tree is not blocking an exit.
- Add water to the tree stand and be sure to add water daily.
- Never use lit candles to decorate the tree.
- Always turn off Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.



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Heating

- Have your furnace has been inspected and serviced by a qualified professional at least once every year.
- Have your chimneys and vents cleaned and inspected by a qualified professional.
- Check your chimney for creosote built-up. Not cleaning your chimney is the leading cause of chimney fires from built up creosote. This service needs to be done at least once a year.
- Burn only dry, seasoned wood in your fireplace or wood stove.
- Check your fireplace screen to ensure it is in good condition and secured to its position in front of the fireplace. A fireplace screen should be metal or heat-tempered glass.
- Place a covered metal container ready to use to dispose cooled ashes at least at least ten feet (10') from your home and any nearby buildings.
- Remind children to stay at least three feet (3') away from the fireplace, wood/pellet stove, oil stove or other space heaters.
- Use only portable space heaters with an automatic shut-off feature.
- Plug in a portable space heater directly into an outlet (not an extension cord) and place it at least three feet (3') from anything that can burn, including bedding, curtains, walls, paper, and even people.
- Place notes throughout your home or set reminders on your phone to turn off portable heaters when you leave a room or go to bed.

Entertaining

- Test smoke alarms to ensure they are working. A smoke alarm should be located on every level of your home, inside each sleeping room, and outside each separate sleeping area.
- Test carbon monoxide alarms to ensure they are working. A carbon monoxide alarm should be located outside each sleeping area and on every level of your home.
- Tell guests about your home fire escape plan.
- Keep the floor clear to avoid trip hazards like children, toys, pocketbooks, or bags.
- Keep matches and lighters up high in a locked cabinet.
- Ask smokers to smoke outside. Remind smokers to keep their smoking materials with them so young children do not touch them. Provide large, deep ashtrays for smokers. Wet cigarette butts with water before discarding.

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