

NFPA Fact Sheets

Candle Safety

Remember that a candle is an open flame. It can easily ignite any combustible nearby.

Facts and Figures

- New data from NFPA shows that home candle fires peaked on Christmas Day in 1999. Second peak day was New Year's Day. Third peak day was Christmas Eve.
- On Christmas Day in 1999, there were an estimated 200 home candle fires reported to fire departments in the U.S. This is five times the daily average of 40 such fires seen throughout the year. Candle fires represent about 10% of the home structure fires that occurred on Christmas Day. January 1 ranked second with 150 home candle fires, and Christmas Eve ranked third with 130.
- During 1999, an estimated 15,040 home fires started by candles were reported to public fire departments. These fires resulted in an estimated 102 civilian deaths, 1,473 civilian injuries and an estimated direct property loss of \$278 million.
- Home candle fires jumped 20% from 1998 to 1999 to hit their 20-year peak in 1999, the latest year for which data is available.
- Candle fires accounted for an estimated 4.1% of all reported home fires.
- Two-fifths (40%) of the home candle fires started in the bedroom.
- Over the last decade, candle fires have almost tripled from the 5,460 reported in 1990.
- December had almost twice the number of home candle fires of an average month.
- Thirty-eight percent of candle fires occurred after candles were left unattended, abandoned or inadequately controlled; Twenty-three percent occurred when some form of combustible material was left or came too close to the candle; Eight percent were started by people (usually children) playing with the candle; Thirteen percent started after the candle user fell asleep.
Source: National estimates based on NFIRS and NFPA survey (preliminary data). The full report will be available soon.

Safety Tips:

- Extinguish all candles when leaving the room or going to sleep.
- Keep candles away from items that can catch fire (e.g. clothing, books, paper, curtains, Christmas trees, flammable decorations).
- Use candle holders that are sturdy, won't tip over easily, are made from a material that can't burn and are large enough to collect dripping wax.
- Don't place lit candles in windows, where blinds and curtains can close over them.
- Place candle holders on a sturdy, uncluttered surface and do not use candles in places where they could be knocked over by children or pets.
- Keep candles and all open flames away from flammable liquids.



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INTERNATIONAL ENTERPRISES

Manila • Cebu • Davao

52 Kundiman Street, Paltok SFDM
1105 Quezon City, MM, Philippines
Tel: (02) 373-3630 to 32 414-2860
Fax: +63 (02) 373-3639
sales@eversafe.com.ph
www.eversafe.com.ph



- Keep candle wicks trimmed to one-quarter inch and extinguish taper and pillar candles when they get to within two inches of the holder or decorative material. Votives and containers should be extinguished before the last half-inch of wax starts to melt.
- Avoid candles with combustible items embedded in them.

Candles & children:

- Keep candles up high out of reach of children.
- Never leave a child unattended in a room with a candle. A child should not sleep in a room with a lit candle.
- Don't allow children or teens to have candles in their bedrooms.
- Store candles, matches and lighters up high and out children's sight and reach, preferably in a locked cabinet.

During power outages:

- Try to avoid carrying a lit candle. Don't use a lit candle when searching for items in a confined space.
- Never use a candle for a light when checking pilot lights or fueling equipment such as a kerosene heater or lantern. The flame may ignite the fumes.