



R B F & R S

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Celebrate Safely This Christmas

Wrapping presents, decorating the house, preparing Christmas dinner - there's so much to think about at Christmas time. However, with 25 people a day killed or injured in accidental house fires in England during December¹, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) is urging Berkshire residents to put fire safety at the top of their Christmas lists this year.

In England in 2006 there were 3,530 accidental house fires in December² - more than any other month of the year. You may have friends or relatives staying with you over Christmas, spend more time cooking than usual and decorate your home with candles or fairy lights. As a result, all the every day hazards increase, making it especially important to be careful during the festive season.

The good news is that many accidental house fires can be prevented, so make sure a fire doesn't ruin your Christmas by following these simple tips:

Christmas Trees

- Always switch off tree lights and unplug them before you go to bed or leave the house.
- Check your tree lights conform to the British Standard (BS EN 60598).
- Don't put trees near fires or heaters.

Decorations

- Keep decorations, cards and wrapping paper away from candles, fires, lights and heaters.
- Don't place candles under a surface (e.g. a shelf) and keep them away from curtains and furniture.
- Never leave candles burning unattended.

Cooking

- Most fires start in the kitchen – never leave cooking unattended.
- Keep the oven, hob and grill clean, as a build up of grease or fat can easily catch fire.
- Make sure you turn off the oven or hob when you have finished preparing the meal.

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¹ Communities and Local Government 2006 Fire Statistics

² Communities and Local Government 2006 Fire Statistics

Electrical Safety

- Never overload sockets – make sure you only use one plug per socket.
- Switch off and unplug electrical appliances when they're not in use and before you go to bed unless they are designed to be left on (e.g. a freezer).

Paul Jacques, Community Safety Manager, said: "The best present you can give your family this Christmas is a working smoke alarm. Smoke alarms act as early warning systems in the event of a fire, giving you precious extra seconds to escape. Fit one on every level of your house and test the batteries every week.

"You can also protect yourself and your family by making an escape plan in advance. If you have guests staying with you over the festive season, take a few minutes to talk your plan through with them to ensure they know how to get out of the house safely in an emergency. We hope you all have a very happy - and safe - Christmas."

ENDS.