



Have a safe and happy holiday.

From Thanksgiving through the New Year, our homes turn into magical wonderlands full of people, decorations and good times. But this lively season also brings some dangers from the overflowing turkey fryer to the loaded down Christmas tree. By issuing some extra precautions, you can ensure your holiday festivities are hazard-free.

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Thanksgiving is right around the corner, and so is Uncle Bob with the turkey fryer. As the Southern trend for deep-fried – instead of roasted turkey – spreads throughout the country, so does the threat of a dangerous dinner. With approximately five gallons of scalding grease propped over an open flame, carelessness can lead to a horrific fire.

If your family can't live without the mouthwatering taste only fried turkey will bring, please follow these tips for safer use of the mammoth fryer.

- First and foremost, follow all directions provided with the user manual
- Turkey fryers should always be used outdoors, never on wooden decks or in garages, and a safe distance from buildings
- Make sure fryers are used on a flat surface to reduce accidental tipping
- Never leave the fryer unattended
- Never let children or pets near the fryer; even after use the oil can remain dangerously hot for hours
- Do not overfill the fryer
- Use well-insulated potholders or oven mitts, and if possible, wear safety goggles
- Keep an all-purpose fire extinguisher nearby; never use water to extinguish a grease fire

After all the turkey is gone and the calendar flips to December, be sure to keep the caution light on when transforming your home into a winter wonderland.

As the centerpiece of many holiday homes, Christmas trees are a primary safety concern. If you have an artificial tree make sure it is labeled as "fire resistant." If you would rather have your home filled with the natural pine smell, keep your live tree well watered. A dry tree can pose as a fire hazard. No matter what style of tree you have, set it in a stable stand to prevent it from tipping over.

Many other holiday decorations, including glass ornaments and poinsettias, do not mix well with children and pets. Some wrapping papers and trims can be toxic when ingested. Be mindful of the products you have and keep presents and ornaments out of reach in any room that is ever left unattended.

Fires are the number one safety concern with holiday decorating. A cozy fire burning can set the stage

for a holiday gathering, but safety points must be addressed to prevent your snug atmosphere from becoming a danger zone. Mantel decorations such as stockings, garland and swags must be kept clear of flames at all times. Keep the tree and presents at least three feet away from the hearth. And, to keep sparks under control, use a tight-fitting mesh metal screen.

Electric lights and surge protectors are also a fire threat during this bustling season. Thoroughly check all sets of lights for damaged sockets, wires and burned-out bulbs. Never use electric lights on a metal tree. Also, be sure to turn off all lights when you leave or go to bed.

Even after the holidays are over, and all the decorations are put away, still exercise caution to keep your home safe. It doesn't take a tree in the house or Uncle Bob outside with the turkey fryer to start a fire, so make sure your home is adequately equipped with smoke detectors and a fire extinguisher. Have a Happy (and safe) Home!

