



## TOWN OF GILLAMS

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### **Winter Season Prompts Fire Safety Reminder for Residents**

As temperatures begin to drop and the winter weather approaches, the Honourable Kevin O'Brien, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Minister Responsible for Fire and Emergency Services, is advising residents to make fire safety a priority throughout the coming months.

"This season is a busy time of year for residents throughout Newfoundland and Labrador but the cold winter weather should remind us all to keep fire prevention top of mind," said Minister O'Brien. "It is an unfortunate fact that most residential fires in Canada occur during the winter months. Residents should make sure they pay particular attention to the safe operation of home heating appliances and take particular precautions when preparing their homes for holiday festivities."

If using electrical equipment and step ladders when decorating, ensure other people are present to help with these activities. Christmas tree lights should be turned off at night and electrical outlets should not be overloaded. In addition, families should also have an escape route planned to ensure that everyone knows how to safely exit in the event of a fire or emergency.

Minister O'Brien noted that no matter what the season, homes and cabins are required to have a working smoke alarm on every level and in each sleeping area. Chimney fires remain one of the most frequent calls for municipal fire departments and the minister encouraged all residents to ensure regular inspection and cleaning of chimneys and flue pipes. Carbon monoxide detectors are also recommended, as carbon monoxide poisoning is the most common risk associated with home heating.

"The safety of the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador continues to be a priority for our government and must be a priority for residents as well," said Minister O'Brien. "National statistics show people are more likely to die in an accidental home fire during the holiday season than at any other time of the year. It's important for all of us to take an active role in ensuring our safety, especially during a time of year focused on family and friends."

Further tips for holiday and winter fire safety can be found in the backgrounder below. Additional information on general fire safety and emergency preparedness can be found at [www.gov.nl.ca/fes](http://www.gov.nl.ca/fes)

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## **BACKGROUNDER**

### **Winter and Holiday Fire Safety Tips**

#### **General Tips**

- Ensure local emergency numbers are known and posted in the home to facilitate quick notification of responders in the event of an emergency (fire, police, ambulance).
- Inspect all heating equipment annually and clean, repair and replace as necessary.
- Test smoke alarms regularly.
- Install a carbon monoxide alarm in a central location outside each sleeping area.
- Be attentive when cooking. Ensure stovetops are free of flammable materials and keep a fire extinguisher close at hand.

#### **Christmas tree**

- Choose a real tree that is freshly cut. It will stay green longer and be less of a fire hazard.
- Place a real tree in a stand that will hold two to three litres of water and top it up daily. Use a tree stand that has widespread legs for better balance.
- Keep all trees away from heat sources such as a radiator, television, fireplace, heating duct or sunny window. It should not block doors or windows.
- Never use lighted candles on any Christmas tree.
- Remove a real tree within 10 to 14 days.

#### **Candles**

Candles are a leading cause of residential fires in Canada. It is recommended that residents never use open flame candles, but if you do:

- Never leave burning candles unattended.
- Only use candles with adult supervision.
- Put candles in sturdy holders on a stable surface, well away from children and pets, as well as drafts, curtains or other combustibles.
- Extinguish candles before leaving the room or going to sleep.

### **Lights**

- Use tested and certified light strings/sets.
- Use the proper lights for the environment. Indoor light sets should not be used outdoors because they lack weatherproof connections. Some outdoor light sets burn too hot indoors.
- Inspect light strings/set before use. Check for cracked bulbs and for frayed, broken or exposed wires. Discard if faulty.
- Do not use electric light strings/sets on metallic trees, as it may pose an electrocution hazard.
- Turn off all tree and display lights before going to bed or leaving the house.

### **Decorations**

- Choose decorations that are flame-retardant, non-combustible and non-conductive.
- Avoid using angel hair (glass wool) together with spray-on snowflakes. This combination is highly combustible.
- Do not use metallic ornaments on the tree. If they make contact with defective wiring they could become a shock hazard.
- If there are young children or pets in the home, avoid very small decorations.

### **Space Heaters**

- Maintain a one metre separation between combustible items such as paper, furniture and curtains.
- When buying a new space heater, make sure it carries the mark of an independent testing laboratory for use in Canada, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL) or Canadian Standards Association (CSA).
- Turn off space heaters when the room is unoccupied or under circumstances when manufacturer's instructions say they should be turned off.
- Portable space heaters are easy to knock over in the dark and should be turned off while sleeping.

### **Fuel-Based and Electric Heating**

- In a fireplace or wood stove, use only dry, seasoned wood to avoid the build-up of creosote deposits that easily catch fire and account for most chimney fires and the largest share of home heating fires generally. Use only paper or kindling wood, not a flammable liquid, to start the fire. While their use is safe in fireplaces, do not use artificial logs in wood stoves.
- Ensure a fireplace has a sturdy screen to prevent sparks from flying into the room. Allow fireplace and woodstove ashes to cool before disposing in a metal container, which is kept a safe distance from the home.
- Ensure fuel-burning equipment such as stoves or fireplaces are vented to the outside, that the venting is kept clear and unobstructed, and that the exit point is properly sealed around the vent, all of which is to make sure deadly carbon monoxide does not build up in the home.

Shelley Penney

Town Clerk/Manager