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SEDGWICK COUNTY, KANSAS
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sedgwick County Fire Department Offers Holiday Safety Tips

(Sedgwick County, Kansas) – The same thing happens every year -- the holidays are rapidly approaching and your mind is on holiday parties, family reunion dinners, and putting up those decorations. The farthest item from your thoughts is fire safety. What you may not realize is that the winter months (December, January, and February) are the leading months for home fires and home fire deaths in the United States. According to the National Fire Protection Association, more than one-third of U.S. home fire deaths occur during the winter months.

The Sedgwick County Fire Department wants to remind you that the greater majority of these fires are preventable. The first step is simply being aware of fire hazards, however, taking the actions necessary to avoid them is the most crucial step.

- **Check your smoke detectors.** Replace the batteries on an annual basis or when you hear a slight "chirping" signal coming from the detector. To help remember when you replaced the battery, pick a date and replace it on that date every year.

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- **Have your home heating systems inspected** by a professional on an annual basis and make any necessary repairs quickly. Clean the chimney and fireplace and remove ashes after use. If you hang your Christmas stockings on the mantle, do not build a fire.
- **Cooking is the leading cause of home fires.** Turn pot handles in, away from the front of the stove. Don't place a small pan on a large burner or a large pan on a small burner. Always keep a potholder nearby to grasp hot panhandles; never use a towel. Don't cook wearing long sleeves that can dangle near the burners. Keep a lid handy for each pan and use it to smother any flames. Don't use water to extinguish a grease fire; it could just make a bad situation worse.
- **Check your holiday decorations** and replace any worn or damaged wiring. Turn off the lights at bedtime or when they will be unattended. Do not overload your outlets using extension cords or a multi-plug adapter. Avoid the use of candles; melting wax can cause serious burns. Never use a candle as a Christmas tree decoration.
- **Christmas trees** are always a fire hazard in your house. Choose a freshly cut tree, and cut a few inches off the trunk before placing it in the stand. Check the water level daily. Once the tree dries out, take it outside. Be sure the tree is away from any heat source or sparks.
- **Practice your home fire drill now.** Remind your family to know two ways out of every room. Arrange a meeting place somewhere outside and have your family memorize the emergency fire reporting number, 9-1-1. Post the number near each phone.

“We don’t want the holidays to end in tragedy,” said Sedgwick County Commission Chairman Ben Sciortino. “By taking simple safety precautions, you and your family can enjoy a safe holiday season.”

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