

Winter Home Preparedness

As you decorate your home for the holidays, take some extra time to prepare your home for the emergencies and disasters, such as [winter storms and extreme cold](#), which can happen over the winter months.

Home preparedness during the winter

[Install and check smoke detectors](#). House fires occur more frequently during the holiday season due to a lack of safety precautions.

Make sure your home is insulated. Caulk and weather strip doors and windows. To keep pipes from freezing, wrap pipes in layers of newspaper, then plastic. Let faucets drip to avoid freezing. Close valves that lead to outdoor faucets and open the faucets outside to allow for drainage.

Holiday safety

The kitchen is often the place where family gathers. But it is also the place where most fires start in the home. The [National Fire Protection Association \(NFPA\)](#) and the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) offer tips on how to [prevent cooking fires](#) from starting in the first place.

NFPA studies show cooking fires are the number one cause of home fires and home fire injuries. It can be easy to get wrapped up in entertaining guests, but it is important to remember to monitor meal preparation closely as most cooking fires start because cooking has been left unattended.

NFPA offers these additional tips for safer cooking:

- Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling, or broiling food.
- If you must leave the home for even a short period of time, turn off the stove or the oven.
- If you are simmering, baking, boiling or roasting food, check it regularly and remain in the home while the food is cooking. Use a timer to remind you that the stove or oven is on.
- Stay alert. Don't cook if you are sleepy, have been drinking alcohol or have taken medicine that makes you drowsy.
- Keep things that burn – pot holders, oven mitts, paper or plastic - off your stovetop.
- Don't store things that can burn in an oven, microwave, or toaster oven.
- Clean food and grease off burners, stovetops and ovens.
- Wear clothing with sleeves that are short, close fitting, or tightly rolled up.
- Keep kids away from cooking areas by enforcing a "kid-free zone" of 3 feet (1 meter) around the stove.
- Use the stove's back burners whenever possible, and turn pot handles inward to reduce the risk that pots with hot contents will be knocked over.
- Never hold a small child while cooking.

Arizonans should also practice [safety when decorating](#) their homes for the holiday season.

- Regularly check your Christmas tree for fresh, green needles. [Trees that have dried out over several weeks burn faster than fresh, well-watered trees](#). Remember to keep your tree watered at all times.
- Always keep [candles](#), as well as matches and lighters, out of the reach of children, and don't leave children unattended in a room with lit candles.
- Look for the holographic UL Mark on light strings and [electrical decorations](#). The UL Mark means that UL engineers have tested samples of the product for safety hazards.
 - Green holographic UL Mark = Indoor-only use
 - Red holographic UL Mark = Indoor and outdoor use
- Carefully inspect each electrical decoration - new and old - before plugging it in. Cracked sockets and frayed, bare or loose wires can cause a serious electric shock or start a fire. Replace damaged items with new, UL-Listed decorations.

- Take down holiday lights after 90 days of use to prevent damage from weather conditions and neighborhood animals.

Review the [home hazard checklist](#) to identify ordinary items that can cause harm or damage. A [complete guide](#) to preparing your home and your family for severe winter weather is available through the Ready campaign from FEMA.

(Sources: [National Weather Service](#), [American Red Cross, Grand Canyon Chapter](#), [National Fire Protection Association](#), [U.S. Fire Administration](#), [Ready](#))