

# Maryland State Fire Marshal

# News Release

Martin O'Malley  
Governor

William E. Barnard  
State Fire Marshal



## STATE FIRE MARSHAL REMINDS ALL MARYLANDERS

### ***“BE VIGILANT OF FIRE SAFETY AS WE BEGIN THE WINTER SEASON AND ENJOY HOLIDAY FESTIVITIES”***

**PIKESVILLE, MD** (December 5, 2012) -- State Fire Marshal William E. Barnard wants to remind all Marylanders to check for fire safety where they live, where they work and even where they attend classes, trainings and meetings. *“Fire and life safety is everyone’s responsibility, by testing smoke alarms, keeping exits clear of obstructions, and maintaining fire alarms and fire sprinkler systems, we can all avoid injury or death from fire,”* said the State Fire Marshal.

To ensure your best chances of surviving a fire, the State Fire Marshal offers the following tips on both escaping a fire and preventing one to begin with.

- Test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms to ensure they are working properly. Remember, the effects of toxic smoke and gases can quickly overcome your ability to think clearly. Every second counts when escaping the ingredients of fire.
- Check exits from both your home and any place you go to ensure you will be able to get to safety. Blocked exits resulting from improperly placed chairs, tables or even holiday decorations can result in the delay of getting out quickly and safely. Be vigilant of these safety concerns whether at church, school or even your local favorite eatery.
- When using portable unvented fuel-fired heaters, such as kerosene heaters, make sure to only use the recommended fuel specified in the owner’s manual and **NEVER use gasoline**. **Note:** Portable kerosene heaters are banned for use in Baltimore City.
- If you find it necessary to use an electric space heater, use only one that has been approved by an authorized testing laboratory such as UL.
- Keep all portable space heaters at least three feet away from anything combustible.
- If heating equipment fails, do not use kitchen stoves or ovens to supply heat. These devices are not designed for that purpose and the chance of a fire improves greatly.

- When using fireplaces, woodstoves or pellet stoves; please ensure these heat sources have been installed and properly serviced by trained technicians according to state and local codes, which will allow them to work at peak efficiency and lower the risk of a catastrophic failure.
- Never leave candles burning unattended. Extinguish the flame before leaving the room.
- Prevent fires from starting on the stove by staying in the kitchen and monitoring the food as it is being prepared. If a fire would occur in a pot or pan on the stove, calmly place a lid on it and turn off the burner. Allow it to cool before removal from the stove.
- If using a turkey fryer, please follow all safety precautions and manufacturer's instructions.
- If you are using a cut tree for Christmas, special precautions need to be observed: Select a tree with green needles that do not remove too easily from the branches and the trunk should be sticky to the touch. Place the tree in a location away from heat sources and add water every day during the recommended two week life span while on display.
- Never use lit candles to decorate a tree. Ensure candles are placed well away from tree branches.
- Inspect holiday lighting for frayed or damaged wiring and check for cracked sockets. Replace strands with new sets as they become worn. Follow manufacturer's guidelines when attaching additional strands.
- Always unplug or switch off all holiday lights before leaving home or going to bed.
- Take down holiday lighting after the holidays. Holiday lights are temporary seasonal decorations that should be limited to 90 days use.
- Dried out trees can ignite more readily. Remove the tree shortly after the holiday and place outdoors.

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The Office of the State Fire Marshal is an agency of the Department of State Police dedicated to helping protect citizens from fire and explosion through a comprehensive program of education, inspection, investigation and fire protection engineering. For more information on fire safety call 1-800-525-3124, log onto our website at: [www.mdsp.org/firemarshal](http://www.mdsp.org/firemarshal) and/or <http://facebook.com/MarylandStateFireMarshal>.

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