



# 10 Easy Tips For Holiday Safety



(NC) Don't let the hustle and bustle of the holidays lead to distraction and accidents. Whether you're hosting a holiday bake-off or an adults-only cocktail party, it's important to remember that safety comes first. To safeguard your home from potential fire hazards, follow these tips and protect your family and guests:

1. Test your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms regularly to make sure they are working. Replace the battery as needed. If the alarms are more than 10 years old, replace them.
2. Have an exit plan in case of fire, and make sure you identify multiple exit points.
3. Check all of your lights before hanging them on the tree or around the house. Throw out any sets that

have been damaged or frayed. When purchasing new lights, look for the certification mark so you know the product complies with applicable standards for safety and performance.

4. Use a timer for outdoor lights so they aren't left on overnight.
5. Don't overload power strips with too many appliances or lightstrings. Make sure they aren't covered by fabrics or rugs, and don't leave the wire exposed in areas where it can be damaged.
6. Blow out candles when you are done with them, especially when leaving the room or house. When lit, keep them out of reach of children and pets and never walk with them.
7. Be careful when cooking and don't leave the kitchen if you're using the stovetop. Never leave the house if the

oven is on and keep countertop appliances unplugged when you are not using them.

8. Have your chimney swept if you have a wood-burning fireplace, and make sure to use the safety screen when there's a fire going.

9. Fresh is best if you purchase a tree or any green garland. Freshly cut trees are more resistant to ignition and smell wonderful, adding to the entertaining vibe.

10. Keep a fire extinguisher in the house. Hopefully, you won't need it, but it's best to be safe.

For complete peace of mind, consult your insurance provider to make sure you have the appropriate home coverage. Companies like Belairdirect can guide you to assess and understand your coverage needs. Find more information online at belairdirect.com.

## Choose The Greenest Builder Available

(NC) As building codes enforce tightened minimum standards for eco-responsibility, the more progressive builders are illustrating their own accountability by using and producing materials that are even more efficient than mandated. This is great news if you are currently designing, planning or simply getting ready to buy a new home — your investment will likely deliver greater environmental conservation, lower occupant costs and increased property value.

Building code revisions worldwide are ushering a whole new generation of structures that are 35 to 40 per cent more environmentally responsible. The improved practices in construction are showcasing advancements in wall building, windows, insulation and air-infiltration.

"Switching from wood-framing to concrete walls, for example, has so many spin-off benefits," explains Natalie Rodgers of Nudura, the manufacturer of an advanced building method called the insulated concrete form (ICF). "Solid, airtight concrete walls would initially lower your energy bills. You'll live in a stronger, more comfortable home while the investment grows in resale value. As important, your home would create far lower demand on natural resources."

Designed like Lego, the interlocking Nudura forms are designed with monolithic concrete sandwiched between two continuous layers of expanded polystyrene (EPS) foam.

"The foam material isolates the concrete and significantly reduces the flow of heat through the wall," says Rodgers. "It stabilizes the internal temperature from day to night fluctuations and provides a largely self-regulating environment. This faster method of construction creates one solid concrete wall."

As a result, you will need less energy for mechanical heating and cooling, delivering cost savings throughout the year. A home built with this concrete system is stronger, provides greater safety, offers greater sound and fire resistance, and would be far less prone to mould, cold spots and drafts.

"Benefits are plentiful to builders too. The patented hinged web allows the forms to fold flat, requiring smaller shipping space and less manpower than other methods."

If you want your builder to use insulated concrete forms, be sure to make the request well before construction gets underway.

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