



For Immediate Release: 11.19.08

From: David Powers
Communications Director
708.358.5781

Contact: Kevin Wiley
Battalion Chief
708.358. 5606

Fire Department's wreath tradition a reminder of need for holiday safety

In an effort to help Oak Park residents stay safe when using holiday decorations, the [Oak Park Fire Department](#) is again taking part in the 28th annual *Keep the Wreath Red* program.

The program, launched in 1980 by the [Illinois Fire Chiefs' Association](#), encourages local fire stations around the state to place a wreath in the front window, and illuminate it with red holiday lights. The red lights signify that no fire has occurred in the community as a direct result of holiday lights. If such a fire does occur, a light is changed from red to white.

The Oak Park Fire Department is encouraging residents to stay safe this holiday season – and keep the wreath illuminated with just red lights. Take caution when lighting holiday trees and other decorations, especially when using extension cords. Care with candles and fireplaces also are important, firefighters say.

Here are some other tips from the Oak Park Fire Department to *Keep the Wreath Red* this holiday season:

- **Check all illuminated decorations to make sure they are in good condition.** Light strands that have frayed or cracked wires should be thrown away and replaced with [UL](#) approved devices. Outside cords should be approved for exterior use and inside cords should not be placed under carpets or throw rugs. Power strips should be used inside whenever possible.
- **Frequently water live trees.** The water level should cover the tree stem by at least two inches and should be checked daily. If the needles fall off readily when the tree is shaken, remove the tree from your home. Always turn off the lights when leaving your home or retiring for the night. Never use lighted candles on trees.
- **Use extreme caution with candles.** Extinguish candles when leaving the room or retiring for the night. Use sturdy candleholders that will not tip over easily. Keep candlewicks trimmed to keep the flames small. During power outages, avoid using candles. Use flashlights or battery operated candles.

-more-

Keep the Wreath Red
2-2-2

- **Make sure your fireplace is in good working order.** Have the chimney cleaned regularly. Do not burn Christmas wrappings or tree branches in the fireplace – their intense rapid burning can cause a chimney fire or flames can extend out of the firebox and into your home. Make sure the chimney flue is open before using the fireplace.
- **Check smoke detectors to ensure they are working.** Smoke detectors more than 10 years old should be replaced. New smoke detectors make good presents.

For more information on the *Keep the Wreath Red* program or fire safety, e-mail fire@oak-park.us or call 358.5606. Visit the Oak Park Fire Department online at www.oak-park.us/fire.

###