

Steps to Safely Celebrate the Holidays

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CHICAGO - Thanksgiving is less than a week away, and while smart travel, cooking, decorating and heating practices are always important to remember this time of year, the ongoing coronavirus pandemic means even more safety measures should be taken this holiday season.

“The safest option for celebrating Thanksgiving this year is to celebrate with people in your household,” said Kevin M. Sligh, acting regional administrator, FEMA Region 5. “As COVID-19 continues to spread, staying home is the best way to save lives. If you need to leave your home, remember to wear your mask and maintain six feet of distance between you and others.”

Keep in mind these additional tips to keep your holidays as safe as possible:

1. **Consider alternative celebrations.** While the holidays are traditionally a time to gather with friends and loved ones, consider “virtual” alternatives that allow everyone to remain safely at home. CDC has some helpful suggestions on their Thanksgiving page at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus.
2. **Be a prepared traveler.** If you must travel, check travel restrictions and get your flu shot before you go. Always wear a mask in public settings and wash your hands often. If you plan to leave the state, understand the requirements for isolating or quarantining when you arrive and/or return, then plan accordingly. If you’re driving to your destination, ensure you have an [emergency supply kit](#) in your car, and if you’re packing for a flight or train ride, consider a small kit in case of emergency: flashlight, batteries, & a spare USB power bank.
3. **Protect against home fire risks.** Put working smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms on every level of your home and inside and outside sleeping areas. Change the batteries in these alarms twice per year, or per manufacturer’s guidelines.
4. **Practice smart cooking.** Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling, broiling, or boiling food and turn pot handles toward the back of the stove so they won’t get bumped. Clean cooking equipment after each use—crumbs in



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a toaster or grease on the stove can catch on fire.

5. **Heat your home safely.** Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from fireplaces, wood stoves, portable heaters and radiators. When you leave a room or go to bed, turn heaters off or unplug them.
6. **Decorate with care.** Nearly half of holiday decoration fires happen because decorations are placed too close to a heat source. Think about using battery-operated flameless candles this season. If that isn't an option, place candles at least 12 inches away from anything that burns and ensure they cannot be reached by children or pets. Inspect holiday lights before you put them up and throw away light strands with frayed or pinched wires. If you're putting up a tree inside your home, water it every day.

For more readiness tips, visit www.ready.gov, www.cdc.gov, www.usfa.fema.gov, or download FEMA's free app, available for your Android, Apple or Blackberry device.

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