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Home Security

Protect house during holidays

The holiday season is a time for family, friends and good cheer. It is also a time for home owners to be especially wary of fires and burglars.

In the United States alone, a home is burglarized every 13 seconds with an annual loss of \$3.5 billion for home owners. Fire, too, exacts a heavy and far more frightening toll. There are more than 750,000 home fires each year, resulting in 5,000 deaths and more than \$3 billion in property damage.

"People are more relaxed and carefree during the holiday season," says Les Brualdi, president of ADT Security Systems, international manufacturers and suppliers in the life and property protection industry. "It's a time of celebration and sharing — and also a time when many people travel to visit friends and family. Fire and theft have no place in such an idyllic setting."

"Thousands of lives and millions of dollars can be saved every year with the use of an electronic home security system," says Brualdi. But even if you don't have an electronic system, you can take some steps to ensure the safety of your home.

FOR A SAFE, theft and fire-free holiday season, the professionals at ADT recommend the following safety measures:

To prevent fire, turn off Christmas tree lights when you go to bed and when you leave the house. Be sure to keep the tree well watered so it doesn't dry out, and

don't use space heaters near the tree.

Fireplaces should be completely screened, and you should never go to bed leaving a fire to "burn out." Also, never overload a fireplace with paper, wood or plastic.

Never leave candles burning unattended. And keep open flames away from the Christmas tree or any greens.

MAKE SURE all electrical appliances and tree lights are UL-listed.

Don't smoke in bed. Cigarettes cause close to one-third of all multiple death fires.

Install a heat and smoke alarm in the immediate vicinity of bedrooms and on each additional floor of the house, including the basement.

Develop and practice a fire escape routine.

To discourage burglars, make sure your home appears to be occupied all the time. When you're away, be sure snow will be shoveled or grass cut, and cancel all mail and newspaper deliveries.

Leave a car in the driveway, if you can, when you're away. Or scatter a few inexpensive children's toys around your place.

Leave lights on — preferably controlled by timers that automatically turn on and off — when you go out.

Let trusted neighbors and your local police know about vacations and other long absences.

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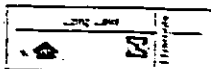
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