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Looming Winter Underscores Importance of Candle Safety on Holidays and in Power Outages

National Candle Association, National Association of State Fire Marshals Offer Fire Safety Tips

WASHINGTON (Nov. 18, 2014) — Winter is coming, and with it the threat of severe weather and temporary electrical power outages increases. As winter also coincides with the desire of many to put out warm decorations for the holidays, the U.S. candle industry and state fire marshals across the country are urging consumers to exercise caution when using candles this season.

Many times decorations involving candles are part of our holiday celebrations and are frequently used with festive trimmings. More than one third of all candle sales occur during the winter holiday season, including Christmas. However, this increased candle use, especially in the presence of flammable objects, heightens the risk of candle fires.

Power failures offer an additional cause for concern—an estimated 20 percent of candle fires involving fatalities occur concurrently with a loss of electrical power. Although flashlights and battery-powered lamps are safe sources of light during lengthy power outages, candles are often considered reliable alternatives if used safely.

To protect your family and home, the National Candle Association and National Association of State Fire Marshals recommend taking the following precautions when using candles for holiday decorations or if the lights go out:

- **Place burning candles at least three inches apart from one another.** This is to ensure candles don't melt one another or create their own drafts that will cause the candles to burn improperly.
- **Never burn a candle on or near anything that can catch fire.** Keep burning candles away from furniture, drapes, bedding, carpets, books, paper, flammable decorations, electronics, etc.
- **Pillar candles and container candles are better choices during a power outage than taper candles.** Broader-based candles are less likely to be accidentally knocked over. When possible, candles should be enclosed within glass globes to protect against burns or fire.
- **Place candles on a stable surface in a fire-resistant holder that is at least 12 inches away from anything flammable, including upholstered furniture and window drapes.**

For added safety when the lights go out, a candle in its holder may be placed on a stable, nonflammable surface, such as a metal cookie sheet, frying pan or ceramic dinner plate.

- **Avoid moving a burning candle at any time, but especially during a power outage.** It is easy to trip in the dark or brush against something flammable. Container candles may be too hot to handle, causing you to drop the container, which could start a fire.
- **Never leave burning candles unattended, and extinguish them when leaving a room.**
- **Make sure candles are well out of the reach of children and pets.** Young children are especially apt to bump into things when a room is unfamiliarly dark.
- **Don't use candles to search for something in a closet or small confined space** where clothes, papers or other combustibles could accidentally ignite.
- **Extinguish all candles before going to bed.** Never use a candle as a nightlight.
- **Extinguish candles safely** by cupping your hand behind the candle flame before blowing it out, or preferably snuff out the flame with a metal candle snuffer. A spark or ember, if blown from the candle, could ignite combustibles nearby.

To learn more about candle fire safety, visit www.candles.org.

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About the National Candle Association

National Candle Association (NCA) is the trade association representing U.S. candle manufacturers and their suppliers. It is widely recognized as the leading technical authority on candle manufacturing, science and safety. For more information, visit www.candles.org.

About the National Association of State Fire Marshals

National Association of State Fire Marshals (NASFM) members are the senior state-level fire safety officials in the U.S., including the District of Columbia. NASFM's primary mission is to protect human life, property and the environment from fire and related hazards. Visit www.firemarshals.org.