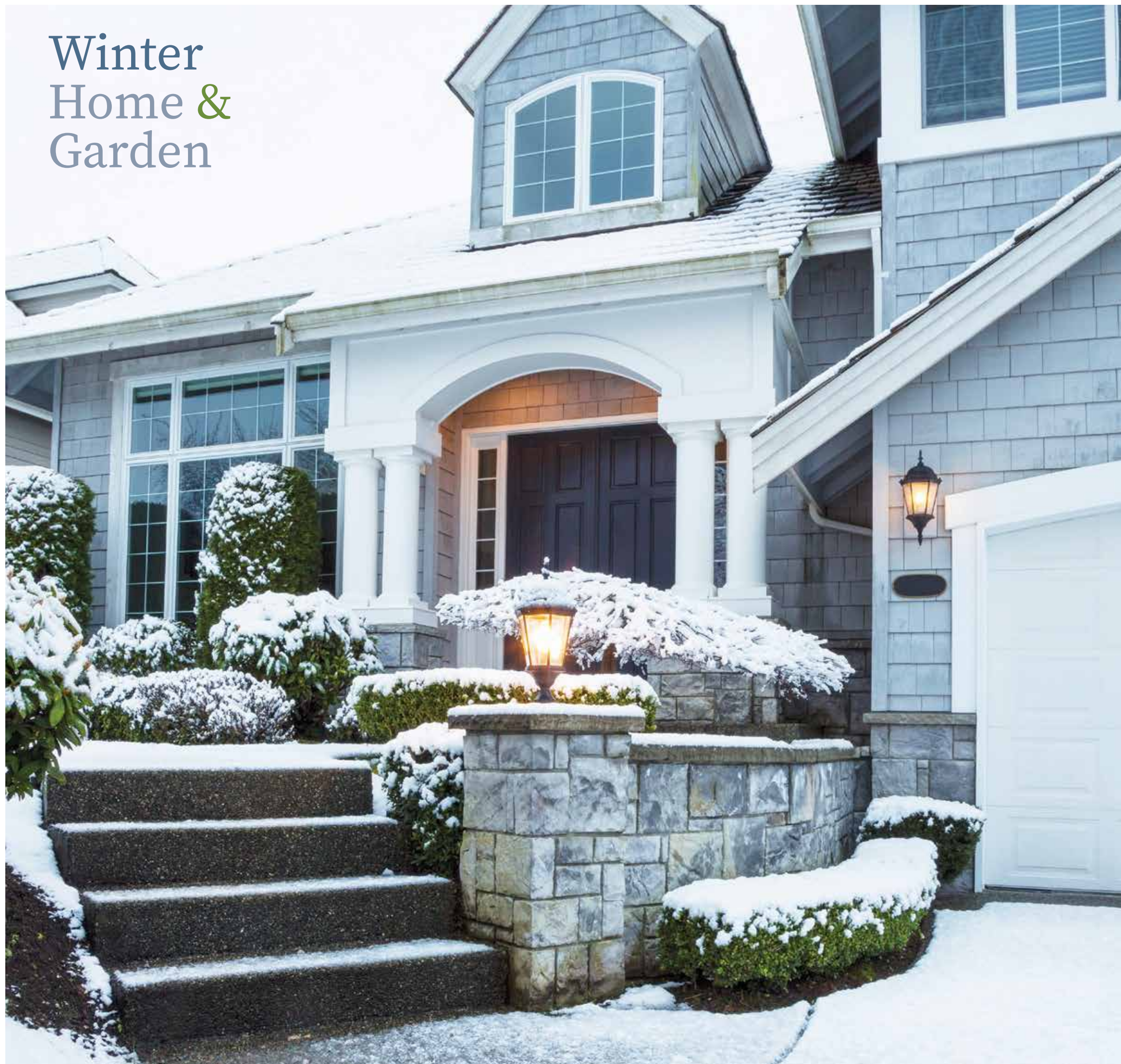


# Winter Home & Garden





# Stay Safe and Jolly this Holiday

As merry and bright as the holiday season is, it can turn dark in an instant. Here are some tips from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission on staying safe and cheerful with holiday decor.

## LIGHTS

Use lights that have been tested for safety and are approved for use (indoor or outdoor) in the location in which you're using them. Check for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires or loose connections. Fasten outdoor lights securely to firm supports and use no more than three standard-sized sets of lights per extension cord.

## TREES

Many artificial trees are fire resistant, but it bears checking for a tag all the same. Real trees should be kept fresh. Check for freshness by making sure the tree is green and needles are hard to pull away from branches. Needles should bend but not break and the trunk should be sticky with resin. Place any kind of tree away from fireplaces, heaters, radiators and other heat sources.

## CANDLES

Never use lit candles on a



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tree or near other evergreens, real or fake. Use candles in non-flammable holders and keep them away from wrapping paper. Keep candles where they cannot be knocked down or blown over and keep them out of the reach of children.

## TRIMMINGS

Use non-combustible or

flame-resistant materials for artificial icicles or tinsel. Avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable and keep trimmings with small parts out of the reach of children. Decorations shouldn't look like candy or food.

## PAPER

Making paper decorations is an adorable past time, but

make sure to choose materials that are flame-resistant. Don't place paper decorations near open flames or electrical connections. Remove wrapping paper from around the tree and fireplace as soon as presents are opened. Do not burn paper in the fireplace.

## FIREPLACES

Before lighting a fire,

remove greens, boughs, paper decorations and anything flammable from the fireplace area. Make sure the flue is open and keep a screen in front of the fireplace while a fire is burning. Be careful with fire salts that produce colored flames when thrown on the fire. They can contain heavy metals that can cause gastrointestinal irritation or vomiting.

# Protect Your Home from Winter

Wintry weather can freeze your home and your budget if you don't take the proper precautions.

The Insurance Information Institute recommends starting preparations for ice and snow while fall's sun still shines. This is what you should do.

- Clean out the gutters so melting snow and ice can flow freely. This can prevent ice damming when water is unable to drain and seeps into the house, dripping from the ceiling and walls. Install gutter guards to keep the gutters clean.

- Trim trees and remove dead branches so ice and snow doesn't do it for you, potentially causing damage to your home, car or even someone walking past your home.

- Repair steps and handrails to reduce risks when they're slick with ice. Make sure you have rock salt or sand on hand to prevent slipping.

- Caulk cracks and wall openings to keep the cold air out and the warm air in. Check weather stripping around windows and doors.

- Add extra insulation to attics, basements and crawl spaces. Too much heat escaping through the roof can cause snow or ice to melt up there. It then refreezes, leading to more ice build up and possible ice dams. Insulating garages, basements and crawl spaces can help protect your pipes from freezing.



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- Have a reliable back-up power source in case of a power failure. If you have a portable generator, never operate it inside and follow all other guidelines for safe use.

- Have your heating system serviced by a licensed professional.

- Check pipes for cracks and leaks. Repair any broken pipes immediately.

- Protect pipes in attics and crawl spaces with insulation or a heating cable. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for heating cables closely.

- Install an emergency

pressure release valve in your plumbing system to protect against increased pressure caused by freezing pipes.

- Move combustible items away from any heat sources such as fireplaces, wood stoves and space heaters.

- Install and check smoke and

carbon monoxide detectors. Both fires and carbon monoxide poisoning instances increase in winter.

- Know how to shut the water off. If your pipes freeze, the quicker you can shut off the water, the better your chances of preventing major damage.



# Keep Your Garden Safe and Snug

Just as you prepare your home against winter's chill, you should take steps to keep your garden safe in the colder months. Start off by learning your growing zone and your plants' cold hardiness.

## PROTECTION MEASURES

Potted plants should come inside, when possible. Check for insects and mold before bringing them in. For plants that can't come in or are in the ground, put a thick layer of hay or mulch down to hold in heat and moisture, protecting plants' root systems. On cold nights, fill water jugs with warm water and nestle them into the cover.

You can also use a plant-protecting blanket at night to keep freezing rain or frost from touching tender plants. Secure it with fabric pegs or lawn staples to keep it in place even when the wind blows.

For trees, put in a trunk wrap to protect against sunscald, which is caused by the alternate freezing and thawing of water in the trunk, usually on the southwest portion of the trunk that's exposed to afternoon sun. Remove the trunk wraps in spring. Stake young trees for winter and remove the staking materials in spring.



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Create enclosures around plants that animals may see as a buffet during the scarcity of winter. Put four-foot-tall hardware cloth fencing around the plants and bury the bottom a few inches into the soil. Put caps on conifer terminal buds to keep deer from topping the trees by folding a 4x6-inch sheet of plain paper and

stapling the edges together, catching the needles with the staples.

## WATERING PRACTICES

Even though many plants are dormant, provide water during the winter months. Evergreen trees and shrubs lose water during cold, dry days and many plants continue

to grow roots even when the leaves are dead. Moist soils hold more heat than dry soils, keeping plants safe in freezing temperatures. Water at least 24 hours before hard-freezing weather arrives.

Protect any water features from freezing temperatures by keeping the pump from freezing and removing water from

ceramic and glass features that may crack. In colder areas, drain the water feature completely before cold sets in.

## ASSESS THE SITUATION

Even if a plant is exposed, frost may not zap the whole thing. Leave it in until spring; stems and roots may grow back in some cases.



# Maintaining Healthy Compost

While most of the garden goes dormant during winter, the compost bin, with its all its heat-generating decomposition, remains a lively place.

Winter is the perfect season to keep your compost going with healthy additions from your holiday feasts.

## WHAT YOU CAN COMPOST

The University of New Hampshire says most all organic waste can be composted. Toss in kitchen scraps, cardboard, wood chips, sawdust, lawn trimmings, leaves and straw. Don't compost pet waste or kitty litter, bones, meat and diseased plants and weeds that have gone to seed.

## WINTERIZE YOUR BIN

Keep your compost bin active this winter by choosing a bin that has a wide top and low sides. Tall, skinny bins are more susceptible to freezing. Cycles of freezing and thawing can dry out the top of the pile; keep it moist by adding water. This will leave you with a cleaner bin.

Add an old carpet or rug to insulate the top of the compost pile, or use a foil-backed bubble insulation sheet available at hardware stores.

## WHAT TO ADD

Fall's leaves make a great addition to most compost bins.



They improve aeration and reduce odors. If you store leaves in a bin, cover them with a tarp to keep them dry. You can also add other brown materials such as straw, sawdust, woodchips or shredded newspaper in lieu of leaves.

Layer greens and browns in the winter; only adding greens will leave you with a stinky mess come spring. Shred the materials by chopping or shredding them into smaller pieces to speed up the decomposition process. Skip additions

of wood ash and turning during the winter months. Leaving the pile alone keeps it warmer and adding too much ash can alter the pH of the compost pile.

## WHAT TO TAKE OUT

Winter is a great time to

harvest your compost. Compost is ready to use when the original organic materials are no longer recognizable and the compost is dark and crumbly and smells like soil. Spread it in the garden now or save it for use in the spring.



# Paint Indoors During Winter

When the weather outside is frightful, it can be the best time to add some cheer inside with fresh coats of paint. We found the best interior color trends for 2025 so you can stay stylish and warm.

## BIOPHILIC DESIGN

Bringing the outside in is never so important as it is in winter. House Beautiful says choosing to bring nature in can improve our health, productivity and happiness. The idea is to create a space that soothes us and encourages creativity.

Colors to look for: Behr Winter White, Sherwin Williams Navajo White, Benjamin Moore Polar Sky, Sherwin Williams Misty, Behr Boreal, Glidden Night Watch.

## GO DARK

Bold, dark shades go cozy this winter as evident in Behr's 2024 color of the year Cracked Pepper, a soft black that complements many design styles. Deep blues are also on-trend, but look toward more warm shades than the navies of past trends. Also having a moment: Black walls, outside of an emo teen's room.

Colors to look for: Sherwin-Williams Dark Night, Benjamin Moore Tulsa Twilight, HGTV Home by Sherwin



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Williams Cyberspace.

## UNEXPECTED COLORS

Get rid of the grieg and go with an unexpected pop of color. Warm, earthy tones are where it's at, bringing a quiet joy to any room. Unwilling to take the plunge? Consider bringing in an accent wall. Baby steps are still steps.

Colors to look for: HGTV

Home by Sherwin Williams Persimmon, Benjamin Moore Lemon Grove, Behr Dried Chamomile.

## BLUES ARE BACK

Sherwin Williams chose breezy Upward as its color of the year for 2024, and the blues aren't going anywhere anytime soon. Consider a color wash effect by putting

the same blue hue on every surface, yes even the ceiling.

Colors to look for: Benjamin Moore Tuscon Teal, Sherwin Williams Slate Tile, Behr Provence Blue, HGTV Home by Sherwin Williams Waterloo.

## REDS ON FIRE

Rich red hues add elegance and style and are perfect for

showing off at holiday soirees. Set them off with deep blacks, grays, gunmetal accents or deep golds. This is the perfect statement color for the coming year.

Colors to look for: Benjamin Moore Caliente, HGTV Home by Sherwin Williams Dark Auburn, Benjamin Moore Garrison Red, Sherwin Williams Beetroot, Behr Fire Cracker.



# Stay Grounded with House Plants

Even though outside is gray and brown, inside can be verdant and green with an array of houseplants to boost your mood and even your air quality.

Here are some stress-free stems to brighten your winter days.

## **SNAKE PLANT (SANSEVIERIA)**

Snake plants, in addition to being tough as nails, releases oxygen at night. They're known for their air purifying abilities and do well in medium to low light.

For bedrooms, look for smaller

snake plants such as *Sansevieria balyi*, *Sansevieria francisii*, and *Sansevieria bella*.

## **LAVENDER**

A medicinal herb found in essential oils, eye masks and even lemonades, lavender has a distinctive and instantly recognizable aroma. It needs plenty of sun and grows best in well-draining, alkaline soil.

## **PEACE LILY (SPATHIPHYLLUM)**

Peace lilies are prized for air-purifying properties and also are valued in feng shui for their ability to harmonize energy and encourage optimism. They're also pretty low maintenance, preferring indirect sunlight and just enough water to make the soil moist.

## **MOTH ORCHID (PHALAENOPSIS)**

Pale-petaled orchids give off a vibe of serenity and peace. *Phalaenopsis* has the added bonus of being easy to care for. Properly maintained, moth orchids can live up to 20 years. They like bright, indirect light. Pot them in loose orchid medium and water once a week, allowing the medium to dry between waterings.

## **JADE PLANT (CRASSULA OVATA)**

Glossy green, rounded leaves represent luck in feng shui and, like the snake plant, release its oxygen at night, helping with better sleep. Jade plants like bright sunlight. Let the soil dry thoroughly between watering.

## **VARIEGATED RUBBER TREE (FICUS TENEKE)**

Bold pinks and cool creams give this variation of the classic rubber tree interest. They come in various sizes, from little guys to towering trees. They prefer partial sunlight and well-drained soil. Dust the leaves regularly to improve photosynthesis and rotate the pot to help the plant maintain its leaves.

## **GOLDEN POTHOS (DEVIL'S IVY)**

Golden pothos grow quickly and easily, stretching across whole rooms before you know it. Its long, trailing vines will give you the impression of a tropical jungle. Other pothos varieties to look for include marble queen, jade, dragon's tail and Cebu blue.





# Stay Warm, Stay Cozy, Stay Safe

While a lit fireplace is tops on the list of cozy winter scenes, dirty chimneys are the leading factor contributing to home heating fires.

The National Fire Protection Association says chimney buildup is the root cause of around 30% of home heating fires. Heating equipment, including fireplaces and wood stoves is the second leading cause of house fires and the third leading cause of home fire deaths.

## FUEL

Use dry, well-aged wood as a fuel in a wood stove or wood-burning fireplace. Wet or green wood causes smoke and contributes to soot buildup in the chimney. Make sure wood is in small pieces and the ash from previous fires has been cleaned out. A thick layer of ash restricts air supply to the logs, resulting in more smoke. Don't burn paper or garbage in your fireplace or wood stove.

## MAINTENANCE

Make sure the damper or flue is open before starting a fire. Keep it open until the fire is out to draw smoke out of the house. Check it by using a flashlight or mirror to look up the chimney. Keep a window cracked while the fire is burning and have your chimney checked annually by a



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professional. Even if it's not due for a cleaning, it's important to check it for animal nests and other blockages.

Have working smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Test them once a month and change the batteries at least

once a year. Replace glass screens on the front of the fireplace with safety screens to reduce the risk of burns.

## WATCH IT

Never leave a fire unattended in the fireplace. Make

sure it is completely out before leaving the house or going to bed. The area around the fireplace should be clear of anything potentially flammable and children should be taught as early as possible about the danger of fires and

the heat coming from them. Never leave a child unattended near a fireplace and keep fireplace tools, lighters and matches out of their reach. Keep a fire extinguisher on hand near the fireplace in case of emergency.