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County urges residents to use candles with care

As the number of home fires that are caused by burning candles continue to rise, the Sarasota County Fire Department reminds families that cautious use of candles can avoid fires and burn injuries. Unattended candles and those used for indoor lighting can be serious fire risks. Never leave a burning candle unattended. Fire Chief Brian Gorski offers these tips for using candles safely:

- Use candles only when an adult is present and awake.
- Never sleep in a room or leave a room unattended where candles are burning. A good rule candle safety is, when you go out, blow it out.
- During power outages, use flashlights or other light sources generated by batteries.
- Never use candles for light to check pilot lights or fueling equipment, such as kerosene heaters or lanterns. The flame could ignite flammable vapors.
- Keep lit candles at least one foot from mattresses, curtains or any other flammable material. Place candles where they will not tip or be knocked over. Never place candles on window sills or near window coverings.
- Keep candles out of the reach of children and pets.
- If young children visit the home, lock up matches, lighters and other fire tools.
- In case of a house fire, leave the premises immediately and call 9-1-1. Make sure your family has an escape plan and knows where to go when they leave the house.
- Never go back into a burning home any reason, not even for pets. Pets stay low to the ground and are often able to escape a fire on their own.
- Keep a working smoke detector in the home.

For more information about fire safety, contact the Sarasota County Fire Prevention Office at 941-861-5000, or visit the county's All Hazards Web site at www.scgov.net

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