

My candle burns at both ends;  
It will not last the night;  
But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends—  
It gives a lovely light!

Edna St. Vincent Millay  
*"A Few Figs from Thistles"*, 1920

Of late, I am reminded of the above poem. With Christmas a little over two weeks away, I have been burning the candle at both ends—figuratively that is. Such an expression dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and it originally meant to waste material wealth, by using the candle wastefully. The fact is, if one were capable of burning a candle at both ends, it surely would give off a lovely light, but it would most likely also be a fire hazard. There is no doubt that a burning candle adds ambiance to a setting; but, unfortunately, a burning candle has also contributed to many tragedies.

According to the NFPA (National Fire Protection Agency), the month of December is the peak time of year for home candle fires. Statistics show that Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New Year's Day are the top three days for candle fires. Decorating for the holidays using burning candles creates opportunities for fires to occur.

Other statistics include the following:

- ✓ Roughly, one-third of home candle fires start in bedrooms.
- ✓ These fires cause thirty-two percent of associated deaths and forty-seven percent of associated injuries.
- ✓ Falling asleep is often a factor.
- ✓ More than half of home candle fires occur when some form of combustible material is too close to the candle.

It is obvious the flicker of candlelight adds a relaxing atmosphere to one's surroundings, but one should also contemplate the potential hazard it creates.

This year, I am encouraging readers to consider using flame-free, LED, flickering candles. Flameless, LED, flickering candles are an electronic alternative to traditional wick candles. Such candles provide aesthetic lighting and come in a variety of shapes, colors and sizes. A small LED light bulb creates the illumination for these flameless candles rather than an open flame. Thus, they pose no threat

as a fire hazard, and the candles do not melt or lose their form over time. Furthermore, they are realistic — even up close! The body of these candles is often made of wax to enhance its resemblance to traditional candles. Thanks to the textured wax exterior and revolutionary moving wick that perfectly replicates a dancing flame, it is almost impossible to tell the difference. Some are scented, serving as air fresheners as well as lighting devices. This is a candle that one can nestle in among evergreens or tuck amidst one’s favorite ornaments without worry. Furthermore, for convenience, most have a convenient built-in timer that turns the candle on for 6 hours, off for 18 hours, and then on again. Many are even remotely controlled. Most will run on a set of batteries for well over five-hundred hours.

Rita and recently purchased a couple of these exciting new candles for our fireplace mantle, and currently they add realistic charm to our Christmas decorations with no worry of fire.

There is no doubt— burning a candle is a great way to liven up a room by adding ambiance. Unfortunately, burning real wick candles can also create devastation if not used properly.

As an alternative, seek out flame-free, LED, flickering candles.

In the meantime, if you are ‘burning the candle at both ends’ in preparation for Christmas, please do so, but only figuratively. Stay safe.

