



Holiday Safety



Christmas is a special time of year and should not end in tragedy because of the extra hazards presented due to the holidays. Here is some advice on how to keep your family and your home safe this holiday season:

Christmas Lights

Decorative lights get used much less often than your everyday lights, and they need more care. Check the fuses are the right type (see the box for the maximum size of fuse you should use).

- If bulbs blow, replace them.
- Don't leave fairy lights on when you go out or when you go to sleep.
- Don't let the bulbs touch anything that can burn easily, like paper.
- Don't overload sockets.

Decorations.

Decorations made of light tissue paper or cardboard burn easily.

- Don't attach them to lights or heaters.
- Don't put them immediately above or around the fireplace.
- Keep them away from candles.

Keep children away from light sets and electrical decorations. All lights present the problem of shock and casualty hazards for curious kids. When you are stringing the lights on your tree, be careful how you place them. Keep all bulbs turned away from gifts and paper ornaments. Lights in windows can cause curtains and drapes to ignite.

Candles

Candles are a traditional and beautiful part of the season. But they are still a direct source of fire in your home. Keep candles a safe distance from other things. And remember that a flickering flame is a thing of fascination to little children. Keep candles out of their reach.

- Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens.
- Always use non-flammable holders.
- Keep candles away from decorations and wrapping paper.
- Place candles where they cannot be knocked down or blown over.

Christmas Trees.

Special fire safety precautions need to be taken when keeping a live tree in the house. A burning tree can rapidly fill a room with fire and deadly gases.

Keep your Christmas tree moist. Trees that are not kept moist can present a very serious fire hazard. A dried out Christmas tree can be totally consumed by fire in less than 30 seconds. Take precautions when buying your Christmas tree. Trees with brown shedding needles should be rejected. If the tree looks green and fresh, take a long needle and bend it between your thumb and forefinger. If it snaps, the tree is too dry. Look for trees with needles that bend. When the trunk of a tree is bounced on the ground, a shower of falling needles shows that tree is dry.

When you bring a tree home, cut about an inch off the bottom of its trunk. This will remove the dried end and allow the tree to absorb water. Make checkerboard cuts into the base at different angles to make a greater surface for water absorption.

Always turn off lights on trees and other decorations when you go to bed or leave your home. A short circuit in any of this equipment could cause a fire. Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. Damaged insulation in lighting on a metallic tree could cause the entire tree to be charged with electricity. To avoid this danger, use colored spotlights above or beside a metal tree, never fastened onto it.

Selecting a Tree for Christmas.

Needles on fresh trees should be green and hard to pull back from the branches, and the needle should not break if the tree has been freshly cut. The trunk should be sticky to the touch. Old trees can be identified by bouncing the tree trunk on the ground. If many needles fall off, the tree has been cut too long, has probably dried out, and is a fire hazard.

Caring for Your Tree.

Do not place your tree close to a heat source, including a fireplace or heat vent. The heat will dry out the tree, causing it to be more easily ignited by heat, flame or sparks. Be careful not to drop or flick cigarette ashes near a tree. Do not put your live tree up too early or leave it up for longer than two weeks. Keep the tree stand filled with water at all times.

Disposing of Your Tree.

Never put tree branches or needles in a fireplace or wood burning stove. When the tree becomes dry, discard it promptly. The best way to dispose of your tree is by taking it to a recycling center or having it hauled away by a community pick-up service.

Gifts

Dispose of gift wrappings soon after opening presents. A room full of paper lying around on the floor is just one more holiday hazard. Place trash in an approved container. Do not burn wrappings in the fireplace. They may ignite suddenly and cause a flash fire.

Christmas Gifts

One of the best Christmas gifts you can get someone is a smoke detector. A smoke detector is worth so much, possibly a loved one's life, yet so inexpensive. Over 90 percent of fire deaths occur in residential dwellings between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. when occupants are asleep. Smoke detectors alert occupants when a fire is still small and there is still time to escape.

Holiday Plants

Holly and mistletoe can be fatal to a small child and the smaller the child, the smaller the dose that can cause serious medical problems. Poinsettia leaves are not fatal if swallowed, but can cause a skin rash and an upset stomach. Call 9-1-1 if your children ingest either of these holiday plants.