



A Season for Sharing in Fire Safety

A Factsheet on Holiday Fire Prevention

**North County Fire
Protection District**
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Holiday Decorations

- **Use only Nonflammable Decorations:** All decorations should be nonflammable or flame-retardant and placed away from heat vents.
- **Never Put Wrapping Paper in a Fireplace:** It can result in a very large fire, throwing off dangerous sparks and embers that may result in a chimney fire.
- **Artificial Christmas Trees:** If you are using a metallic or artificial tree, make sure it is flame retardant.



For more information contact:
The U.S. Fire Administration
16825 South Seton Avenue
Emmitsburg, MD 21727
or
Visit the USFA Web site:
www.usfa.fema.gov

Each year fires occurring during the holiday season claim the lives of over 400 Americans, injure 1,650 more, and cause over \$990 million in damage. According to the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), there are simple life-saving steps you can take to ensure a safe and happy holiday. By following some of the outlined precautionary tips, individuals can greatly reduce their chances of becoming a holiday fire casualty.

Preventing Christmas Tree Fires

Special fire safety precautions need to be taken when keeping a live tree in your home or business. A burning tree can rapidly fill a room with fire and deadly gases. Fresh trees are only allowed in a business when the building is protected by an automatic sprinkler system, the building exit signs are illuminated and each of the exit doors is equipped with panic hardware.

Selecting a Tree for the Holiday

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. Trunks of trees should be cut $\frac{1}{2}$ inch from the bottom.

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. Remove the tree from the building as soon as it becomes dry.

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.



Holiday Lights

Maintain Your Holiday Lights

Inspect holiday lights each year for frayed wires, bare spots, gaps in the insulation, broken or cracked sockets, and excessive kinking or ear before putting them up. Use only lighting listed by an approved testing laboratory. Remove holiday lights the end of each season.

Candle Care

Do Not Overload Electrical Outlet

Do not link more than three light strands, unless the direction indicate it is safe. Connect strings of lights to an extension cord before plugging the cord into the outlet. Make sure to periodically check the wires—they should not be warm to the touch.

Avoid Using Lit Candles

If you do use them, make sure they are in stable holders and place them where they cannot be easily knocked down. Never leave the house with candles burning.