



Asbury Park Fire Department Prevention Division

Christmas Tree Safety

According to the National Fire Protection Association, from 2000 to 2004, Christmas tree fires caused an average of 14 civilian deaths, 21 civilian injuries, and \$16.8 million in property damage per year. On average, one in every 22 reported home Christmas tree fires resulted in death. Additionally, electrical malfunctions, candles, heaters, and children playing with fire started many of these preventable tragic fires.

Steps to reduce the chance of fires from real and artificial trees:

- ‡ When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness. A fresh tree is green with needles that are hard to pull from the branches. The trunk butt of a fresh tree should be sticky with resin, and when tapped on the ground, the tree should not lose many needles.
- ‡ Do not put your live tree up too early or leave it up for longer than two weeks.
- ‡ When purchasing a metallic or artificial tree, make sure it is flame retardant. Look for the label "Fire Resistant." Although this label does not mean the tree won't catch fire, it does indicate the tree will resist burning and should extinguish quickly.
- ‡ Place your tree away from heat sources and escape exits.
- ‡ Decorate your Christmas tree (real or artificial) only with flame-retardant or non-combustible decorations.
- ‡ Make sure your tree stand is wide-based and sturdy. This will reduce the chances of the tree toppling over.
- ‡ Remember to water the tree daily. Do not let a live tree dry out. Always use a tree stand with a water reservoir and keep the reservoir filled.
- ‡ Never use candles on or near the tree.
- ‡ Safely dispose of your tree before it becomes dangerously dry. 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.
- ‡ Never burn tree or tree parts in your fireplace.

Christmas Light Safety

- ‡ Purchase only UL approved lights.
- ‡ Check all indoor and outdoor lights for frayed cords, and replace old lights if necessary.
- ‡ Never use lights as decorations with an empty socket.
- ‡ Lights should not touch combustible materials.
- ‡ Before using lights outdoors, check the label to be sure the lights have been certified for outdoor use.
- ‡ Turn off all Christmas lights, prior to leaving your home or going to bed.
- ‡ Consider using mini lights. These are the safest because they produce less heat.

Decorations:

- ‡ Use only non-combustible or flame-resistant materials to trim a tree.
- ‡ Choose tinsel or artificial icicles of plastic or nonleaded metals. Leaded materials are hazardous if ingested by children.
- ‡ In homes with small children, take special care to avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable. Keep trimmings with small removable parts out of the reach of children to avoid the child swallowing or inhaling these small pieces.
- ‡ Avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food. These may tempt a child to eat them.
- ‡ Wear gloves to avoid eye and skin irritation while decorating with spun glass "angel hair."
- ‡ Follow container directions carefully to avoid lung irritation while decorating with artificial snow sprays.