

CHRISTMAS TREES, DECORATIONS AND LIGHTS - ENJOY THE HOLIDAYS WITH SAFETY IN MIND

For Release

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The Christmas Holiday will soon be upon us and while Christmas trees and decorations add to the holiday spirit, they also pose a risk of fire and injury to many, especially children. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), Christmas trees are a major source of fuel in a fire. One out of every 45 reported home Christmas tree fires result in a death compared to an annual average of one death per 139 reported home fires.

Holiday Lights & Decorative Lighting

Holiday lights and decorative lighting add a festive touch during the holiday season; yet:

- More than one of every four Christmas tree fires is caused by electrical failures or malfunctions and one quarter were due to a form of heat source such as a candle or equipment that were too close to the tree.
- Of home decoration fires, one third were caused by candles; the top four days for home candle fires are Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day.

Safety Tips

Christmas Tree Safety

- Natural trees always involve some risk of fire. To minimize the risk:
 - **ALWAYS** get a fresh tree and keep it watered.
 - **DO NOT** put the tree within 3 feet of a heat source, i.e. fireplace, space heater, radiator, candles, heat vents or lights.
- **NEVER** use lit candles to decorate the tree.
- **DO NOT** burn tree branches, treated wood or wrapping paper in a home fireplace.
- Remove your tree after Christmas or when it is dry.
 - Dried-out trees are a fire danger and should not be left in the home or garage or placed outside against the home.

Holiday Decorating

The Fire Marshal's Office recommends not using candles as a holiday decoration but use battery operated candles as a substitute for real candles; however, should you choose to use real candles, please take the following precautions:

- Put candles in a sturdy metal, glass, or ceramic holders.

- Keep candles at least 12 inches from anything that burns.
- **NEVER** leave a candle unattended.
- Blow out candles after use and before going to bed.
- **NEVER** leave a lit tree or other decorative lighting displays unattended.
- **TURN OFF ALL** decorations before leaving the house or going to bed.
- Inspect and replace lights with exposed or frayed wires, loose connections and broken sockets.
- **DO NOT** overload extension cords or outlets.
- **DO NOT** run an electrical cord under a rug.
- Decorate with children in mind. **DO NOT** put ornaments that have small parts or metal hooks, or look like food or candy, on the lower branches where small children can reach them.
- Keep near each phone the number of the **National Poison Center (800) 222-1222**.
- Trim protruding branches at or below a child's eye level and keep lights out of reach.

Holiday Plants – Decorative but Toxic

Holiday plants such as Poinsettias, Mistletoe, Holly, Amaryllis, Daffodils, Cyclamen, Jerusalem Cherry, and English Ivy may enliven a room, but they are poisonous to humans and/or pets. When displaying these types of plants, place them in locations that can be admired from a distance yet, unattainable to children and pets.

Prince William County Fire and Rescue System Chief Tim Keen would like to remind residents that holidays were designed to spend memorable moments with family and friends and not visits to the emergency room. Make your holiday a cherished and memorable holiday by preparing and implementing proper precautions.

For more information regarding holiday safety, visit the National Fire Protection Association www.nfpa.org and the U.S. Fire Administration www.usfa.fema.gov/.