

Christmas Fire Safety

Natural Trees

Before buying a tree, test for freshness by tapping the base of the tree on the ground or pulling lightly on a limb. If many needles fall off or needles can be pulled off easily, the tree is too dry.

Keep your tree as fresh as possible by placing the stump of the tree in a bucket of water out of doors until you are ready to decorate. Before setting up the tree inside the house, trim two inches off the stump diagonally so it can absorb water. Mount the tree in a large, wide based reservoir stand and add water each day to ensure the tree is well watered.

Choose a suitable location for your tree, ensuring it is well away from heating sources and clear of all exits.

Artificial Trees

Although fireproof, metal and aluminum trees are electrically conductive and cannot be decorated with any electrical product. The metal can cause a short and fire, or simply become “hot” and deliver a nasty shock. A colorful spotlight placed a safe distance from the tree can illuminate aluminum trees. Follow manufacturer’s instructions.

Decorations and Presents

Christmas wrapping and decorations can be highly combustible, and should be kept away from heat sources such as candles, lamps, heaters, fireplaces and wood burning stoves. Gift wrap and boxes should be collected as soon as gifts are opened, and discarded with the garbage or recycled where appropriate.

Indoor Lights and Electrical Decorations

Use only those lights that have been tested and labeled by an approved testing laboratory.

Examine light strings, cords, plugs and receptacles before using. Discard any that have frayed cords, cracks in the lamp holders, or loose connections.

Do not overload electrical circuits or extension cords. Follow instructions on cord labels regarding connecting light strings to extension cords.

Never place furniture or other objects over electrical cords and in particular, never run electrical cords under rugs

Always unplug the light string before attempting to replace a bulb. Ensure the voltage and/or wattage marked on the light set is compatible with the replacement light. This is especially important with mini-lights as they come in different voltages.

Avoid using timers on indoor lights. Tree lights may come on when no one is home and create a fire hazard. Always turn off Christmas lights before leaving home or going to sleep.

Holiday Parties

Decorate with flame-retardant or non-combustible materials. Have large, fireproof, non-tip ashtrays available for guests who smoke. Empty ashtrays regularly into a metal container and after the party, check inside and under upholstery and trashcans for misplaced cigarette butts that may be smoldering

Outdoor Lighting

Use only those lights that have been tested and labeled by an approved testing laboratory and are marked for outdoor use.

Turn off the electricity to the supply outlet before working on outdoor wiring.

Keep electrical connections off the ground and clear of metal objects. Use insulated tape, not metal nails or staples, to hold strings of outdoor lights in place. Be careful not to tape the cords over, under, or along metal eaves troughs.

Run cords above ground, keeping them out of puddles and snow.

Tape all connections with plastic electrical tape to make them as watertight as possible. To prevent moisture from entering bulb sockets, bulbs should face the ground.

When using spotlights or floodlights to light your home or trees, ensure that they are marked for outdoor use to withstand snow and rain. Indoor floodlights should never be used outdoors.

Candles

Never use lit candles as decorations on Christmas trees. Place candles in non-tip candle holders and ensure they are well away from the Christmas tree or other combustible materials. Never leave lit candles unattended and ensure that they are always out of the reach of children.

Matches and lighters are not toys! Store them up high where children can't reach them.

For more detail see candle page.

Fireplaces

Have your chimney inspected at least once a year and have it cleaned if necessary. Always use a fire screen, and burn only material appropriate for fireplaces. Burn only wood. Never burn paper or pine boughs in a fireplace as the burning particles can float up the chimney and onto your roof or into your yard. Never use flammable liquids in a fireplace. Because ashes may rekindle, never store them in your home. Always remove ashes from your fireplace in a metal container.

Fire Safety in the Kitchen

Practice fire safety in the kitchen during the festive season. Don't leave cooking unattended as oil or fat may ignite. If you are faced with a grease fire, carefully slide a lid over the pot and turn off the heat. Always turn pot handles to the back of the stove to avoid pots being pulled or knocked off.

Working smoke alarms are an essential part of fire safety in your home,

install and maintain smoke alarms in your home.

Develop and practice home escape plans, and have a

Safe Holiday Season