



Focus on Fire Safety Archives

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Focus on Fire Safety: Holiday Fire Safety

Decorating homes and businesses is a long-standing tradition around the holiday season. Unfortunately, these same decorations may increase your chances of fire. Based on data from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), an estimated 250 home fires involving Christmas trees and another 170 home fires involving holiday lights and other decorative lighting occur each year. Together, these fires resulted in 21 deaths and 43 injuries.

Following a few simple fire safety tips can keep electric lights, candles, and the ever popular Christmas tree from creating a tragedy. Learn how to prevent a fire and what to do in case a fire starts in your home. Make sure all exits are accessible and not blocked by decorations or trees. Help ensure that you have a fire safe holiday season.

Christmas Trees

What's a traditional Christmas morning scene without a beautifully decorated tree? If your household includes a natural tree in its festivities, take to heart the sales person's suggestion – "Keep the tree watered."

Christmas Tree Retailers

Order the free USFA Christmas Tree Fire Safety Hang Tag to remind your customers how to care for a live tree in their homes. [Order >](#)

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Christmas trees account for hundreds of fires annually. Typically, shorts in electrical lights or open flames from candles, lighters or matches start tree fires. Well-watered trees are not a problem. A dry and neglected tree

Dry Tree vs. High Moisture Tree Fire

This dramatic clip illustrates what happens when fire touches a dry tree and a properly maintained, well-watered tree.



Download Video

 [Comparison of dry tree and properly maintained \(high moisture\) tree fires](#)
(WMV, 8.6 MB, [Windows Media Player Help](#))

 [Higher Quality Clip](#) (H.264, 26.1 MB)

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Holiday Cooking Fire Safety: Turkey Fryers

can be.

Selecting a Tree for the Holidays

Needles on fresh trees should be green and hard to pull back from the branches, and the needles 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 and, 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.

The delicious deep-fried turkey has quickly grown in popularity but safety experts are concerned that backyard chefs may be sacrificing fire safety for good taste.

[Here's why using a deep-fryer can be dangerous »](#)



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 wear before putting them up. Use only lighting listed by an approved testing laboratory.

Do Not Overload Electrical Outlets

Do not link more than three light strands, unless the directions 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.

Do not leave holiday lights on unattended!

Candle Care

Avoid Using Lit Candles

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

Never Put Lit Candles on a Tree

Do not go near a Christmas tree with an open flame – candles, lighters or matches.

As in every season, have working smoke alarms installed on every level of your home, test them monthly and keep them clean and equipped with fresh batteries at all times. Know when and how to call for help. And remember to practice your home escape plan!

Holiday Decorations

Use Only Nonflammable Decorations

All decorations should be nonflammable or flame-retardant and placed away from heat vents. If you are using a metallic or artificial tree, make sure it is flame retardant.

Don't Block Exits

Ensure that trees and other holiday decorations do not block an exit way. In the event of a fire, time is of the essence. A blocked entry/exit way puts you and your family at risk.

Never Put Wrapping Paper in the Fireplace

Wrapping paper in the fireplace can result in a very large fire, throwing off dangerous sparks and embers that may result in a chimney fire.

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Related Topics

- [Candle Fire Safety](#)
- [Electrical Fire Safety](#)
- [Cooking Fire Safety](#)
- [Statistical Reports: Holiday and Seasonal Fires](#)

Related Publications (Download, [Adobe Acrobat \(PDF\) Help](#))

-  [Behavioral Mitigation of Cooking Fires](#) (PDF, 3.5 Mb)

Links of Interest

- [How to Care for Your Farm-Grown Fresh Christmas Tree](#)
- [National Candle Association](#)

Last Reviewed: November 14, 2010



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