

HOLIDAY FIRE SAFETY TIPS

Dry Tree vs. High Moisture Tree Fire

With the onset of the holiday season, it is important to focus on fire safety and prevention. The celebration of the season brings with it increased usage of electric lights, decorations, candles, and the ever popular Christmas tree, all of which can be potential fire hazards. Additionally, cooking fires increase during the holidays as families and friends gather to celebrate. By following general fire safety precautions, potential holiday fires, deaths, and injuries remain preventable.

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 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 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 the 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 our 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 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 re-cycling center or having it hauled away by a community pick-up service.

For other helpful fire safety tips for this holiday season, go to <http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/citizens/focus>.