

Reminder to Consumers: Water Your Tree Daily; a Dry Holiday Tree is a Recipe for Disaster



To reduce the chance of a holiday tragedy, the Bureau of Fire Services (BFS) is urging homeowners to thoroughly water their holiday tree daily.

If a tree has already become too dry, State Fire Marshal Ronald Farr says to remove the tree from the home. "When a holiday tree catches fire there are literally only seconds to escape safely," said Farr. "Removing a dry tree and subsequently the chance for a deadly fire to occur is easier to live with than the consequences such as the loss of your home, or even worse, family members. A holiday tree is replaceable – but your loved ones are not, so don't take the risks."

The BFS asks consumers to follow these tips for holiday tree safety:

- When purchasing an artificial tree, look for the label "Fire Resistant." Although this label does not mean the tree will not catch fire, it does indicate the tree will resist burning and should extinguish quickly.
- When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness. A fresh tree is green, needles are hard to pull from branches and do not break when bent between your fingers. The trunk butt of a fresh tree is sticky with resin, and when tapped on the ground, the tree should not lose many needles.
- When setting up a tree at home, place it away from fireplaces and radiators. Because heated rooms dry live trees out rapidly, be sure to keep the stand filled with water. Place the tree out of the way of traffic and do not block doorways.
- Holiday trees should be checked daily and at the first sign of dryness be removed from the home. The drier the tree, the greater the fire hazard.



Electrical fires are pervasive throughout the United States, causing injury, claiming lives, and resulting in large losses of property. Most electrical fires result from problems with faulty electrical outlets and old wiring. Problems with extension/appliance cords and plugs also cause many home electrical fires. To help prevent an electrical fire in your home, routinely check electrical appliances and wiring and replace all worn, old, or damaged cords immediately.

Causes of Electrical Fires

According to the National Fire Protection Association:

- Lamps, light fixtures and light bulbs (28%) and fixed wiring (22%) account for the largest share of fires among major types of electrical distribution equipment.
- Cords and plugs (39%) account for the largest share of civilian deaths.
- Lamps, light fixtures, and light bulbs (30%) account for the largest share of civilian injuries.

Many avoidable electrical fires can be traced to misuse of electric cords, such as overloading circuits, poor maintenance, and running cords under rugs or in high traffic areas. Faulty electrical systems also cause many fires. In urban areas, faulty wiring accounts for 33% of residential electrical fires.

Electrical fires occur most often during the months of December and January, winter months that call for more indoor activities and increases in lighting, heating, and appliance use. Fifteen percent of residential electrical fires start in the bedroom.



Safety Precautions

- Replace or repair loose or frayed cords on all electrical devices.
- Avoid running extension cords across doorways or under carpets.
- In homes with small children, unused wall sockets and extension-cord receptacles should have plastic safety covers.
- Consider having additional circuits or outlets added by a qualified electrician so you do not have to use extension cords.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for plugging an appliance into a receptacle outlet.
- Avoid overloading outlets. Plug only one high-wattage appliance into each receptacle outlet at a time.
- If outlets or switches feel warm, shut off the circuit and have them checked by an electrician.
- When possible, avoid the use of "cube taps" and other devices that allow the connection of appliances into a single receptacle.
- Place lamps on level surfaces, away from things that can burn and use bulbs that match the lamp's recommended wattage.

Warning Signs of Electrical Dangers

- Frequent or re-occurring issues with blowing fuses or tripping circuit breakers
- A tingling sensation when you touch an electrical appliance or other metal objects
- Discolored or warm wall outlets, or sparks from an outlet
- A persistent burning smell coming from an appliance, room, or area
- Flickering or dimming lights