

## CHRISTMAS SAFETY

### Christmas Tree Safety

Consider purchasing a fire-resistant/fire-retardant artificial tree, as they are safer and cleaner.

#### Caring for Your Tree:

- A fresh tree should not lose green needles when tapped on the ground.
- Needles on fresh trees should be green and hard to pull out from branches. Needles should not break if the tree has been freshly cut, and the trunk should be sticky to the touch.
- Leave the tree outside until you are ready to decorate.
- Cut one inch off the bottom of the trunk to allow the tree to absorb water.
- Clean the tree stand to improve the tree's water intake. Use one capful of bleach to one cup of water.
- The tree stand should hold at least one gallon of water and be the proper size for the tree base to prevent tipping.
- Check the water level every day. A six-foot tree will use a half-gallon of water every day.
- Mix a commercial preservative into the water.
- Keep the tree away from flames and heat sources.

#### Decorating Your Tree:

- Do not block exit doors with your Christmas tree or decorations. Ensure you are able to escape in the event of a fire.
- Before decorating the tree, read and follow the manufacturer's instructions concerning the installation and maintenance of electrical decorations. Use only lights that are listed by an approved testing laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories or Factory Mutual. Use the correct lights for indoor and outdoor use (most light sets are designated for one or the other, but not both).
- Never use electric lights on a metal tree. If a wire is faulty, it could energize the entire tree and create a deadly shock hazard.
- Check the manufacturer's instructions on electrical decorations to determine the maximum number of decorative lights (light strings) and decorations that may be connected. If the product packaging does not indicate the number of light strings that may be connected, do not connect more than three light strings together.
- Before plugging in electrical decorations, carefully inspect them for cracked sockets; frayed, loose, or bare wires; and loose connections, which may cause a serious electrical shock or start a fire.

- Do not allow children or pets to play with light strings or other electrical decorations, as they could produce a deadly electrical shock if they are misused.
- Do not overload extension cords, as this could cause the cord to overheat and start a fire.
- Consider using miniature lights, which have cool-burning bulbs.
- Always unplug electrical decorations before replacing light bulbs or fuses.
- Do not mount or support light strings in any way that may damage a cord's wire insulation.
- The leading heat source attributed to Christmas tree fires, civilian injuries, and property damage is electrical arcing. The leading types of equipment involved in the ignition of Christmas trees are lights, cords, and plugs.
- Use caution with holiday decorations and, whenever possible, choose those made with flame-resistant, flame-retardant, or noncombustible materials.

#### Disposing of Your Tree:

- Never experiment with burning your tree. A dry Christmas tree can be completely consumed in 7-10 seconds with flames as high as 30' and smoke that will fill a large room. You cannot control the fire.
- A house on Oahu was completely destroyed when an open flame ignited the tree. The tree lit up as soon as the flame touched the tree.
- The best way to dispose of your tree is to take it to a recycling center. Dried trees are extremely flammable and should not be left in a house or garage or placed against the house.

#### Miscellaneous:

- Turn off electrical lights and decorations before leaving home or going to bed. Never use candles, even on artificial trees.
- Dispose of the tree properly. Consider recycling it.
- Consider purchasing an artificial tree.

#### Home Safety

- This is a good time to change the batteries in your smoke alarms. Change the batteries when decorating the tree.
- Every home should have a smoke alarm inside each sleeping area and on every level of the home. On floors without bedrooms, alarms should be installed in or near living areas, such as family rooms, living rooms, or dens.
- Cooking vapors and steam can set off a smoke alarm. To prevent this from happening, place the alarm(s) away from the kitchen or bathroom. Clean the alarms regularly and according to the manufacturer's instructions.

- Plan escape routes from the home in the event of a fire. Know at least two ways out of each room. Go directly to a specified meeting place outside of the home, and then call 911.
- After holiday parties, check around and under the sofa and chair cushions for smoldering cigarettes. Provide an adequate amount of ashtrays.
- Have an operable fire extinguisher readily available.
- With the increased popularity of turkey frying, the National Fire Protection Association and the National Burn Foundation warn consumers and discourage the use of turkey fryers. Tests have shown that many of the fryers have a risk of tipping over, overheating, or spilling hot oil, leading to fires and burns. The suggested alternative is to have a commercial professional prepare the turkey.

### Safety Gift Ideas

Consider putting together a gift basket containing one or more of the following items:

- Three smoke alarms and batteries
- A quality fire extinguisher
- A flashlight and batteries or light sticks
- A first aid kit
- A mobile phone