



Christmas Tree Safety



With the joyous holiday season rapidly approaching, the members of the Lake Monticello Fire Department would like to update our citizens of some fire safety concepts regarding Christmas trees. Our goal is to keep all those we are sworn protect to be safe, secure, and enjoy their families and friends during these happy times.

Facts about home holiday fires

- One of every three home Christmas tree fires is caused by electrical problems.
- Although Christmas tree fires are not common, when they do occur, they are more likely to be serious. On average, one of every 31 reported home Christmas tree fires results in a death compared to a regular average of one death per 144 total reported home fires.
- A heat source too close to the tree causes one in every four Christmas tree fires.
- A watered tree can reach a temperature of 1,755 degrees.
- A dry tree can reach a temperature of 1,902 degrees
- December is the peak time of year for home candle fires.
- One-third of all candle fires start in the bedroom.

Fire Safety for Artificial Trees

Artificial trees appear to be the safest choice, as long as it is **UL-listed**. Artificial trees can still catch fire, especially if candles are involved, so look for one that is “flame resistant” or “flame retardant.”

Fire Safety for a Fresh Tree

“The fresher, the safer.” A fresh tree has more natural moisture. **Check the needles...** if they snap or fall off easily, the tree is too dry. When you get the new tree home, cut 2 inches off the bottom of the trunk, and place it in the tree stand with plenty of water. Be sure the tree is stable and secure in the stand. If necessary, secure the upper portion of the tree to a wall. The tree will need about a **gallon of water every couple of days**, but it will probably need extra water the first day or two. Studies have shown that a dry tree is likely to catch fire unintentionally, but one that is kept watered is unlikely to do so.

Where You Place Your Tree Matters

For optimal fire safety, place your tree strategically **away from heat sources** like candles, space heaters, vents, radiators, and fireplaces — *do not block stairways or exits!*

What about Christmas Tree Lights?

Use lighting that is **UL-listed and approved**. The Underwriter’s Laboratory is an independent testing organization that ensures lights and other electrical items are safe. Look for the label! Be sure to pay attention to whether your lights are for **indoor or outdoor** use. (It does matters)

Use **LED lights**. They do not get as hot, and the plastic casing is less likely to break than a glass bulb. They last longer and are more energy efficient, too!

Check Your Decor for Damage.

Electrical problems cause about 1/3 of Christmas tree fires. **Check last year’s decorations for damage** — a squirrel in the attic eating through the wire, for example. Outdoor lights might wear out more quickly from season to season, so check for damage there, too.... Look for loose bulb sockets, damaged wires, or plugs before installing them. When in doubt, do not use and replace them.

Do not Overload Your Outlets and Power Strips!

Many manufacturers will tell you how many lights you can string together, but a good rule of thumb is a **maximum of 3 strands**. Do not overload electrical outlets or extension cords, even if you use a surge protector. Use only surge protectors that have their own self-contained circuit breaker protection.

Turn Your Lights Off When Unattended.

Before leaving the house or going to bed. Be sure to turn off your holiday lights. You do not want lights to be left on to cause a problem when you are not around to act fast. If you use a remote or foot switch, they can be less of a hassle to turn off.

Dispose of Your Live Tree Soon!

- After Christmas is over, recycle your live tree soon. A report from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) shows that **half** of all Christmas tree fires occur 20 days **AFTER** Christmas. Even a well-watered tree should be taken down after 4 weeks, according to the NFPA. If you put your live tree up right after Thanksgiving, take it down right after Christmas... not on New Year's Day.
- Dried-out trees are a "fire danger" and should not be left in the home, garage or placed outside leaning against the home.

Candles.

Candles are a major culprit around the holidays and are the cause of many fires. Candles may be pretty to look at, but they are a cause of home fires — and home fire deaths. Remember, a candle is an open flame, which means that it can easily ignite anything that is combustible and can burn.

- Blow out all the candles when you leave the room or go to bed.
- Avoid the use of candles in the bedroom and other areas where people may fall asleep.
- Keep candles at least 12 inches away from anything that can burn.
- **Think about using flameless candles in your home. They look and smell like real candles.**

If you Do burn candles, make sure that you:

- Consider using LED battery operated candle lights.
- Use candle holders that are sturdy and will not tip over easily.
- Put candle holders on a sturdy, uncluttered surface.
- Light candles carefully. Keep your hair and any loose clothing away from the flame.
- Do not burn a candle all the way down — put it out before it gets too close to the holder or container.
- Never use a candle if oxygen is used in the home.
- Be careful when using candles around children. Do not have children light or extinguish candles.
- Have flashlights and battery-powered lighting ready to use during power outage. Never use candles.

Children and Pets

A curious child captivated with the lights and decorations can easily knock over or pull down an unstable Christmas tree. Keep a watchful eye on all small children when they are in the same room with the Christmas tree. Likewise, pets also have the ability to knock down the tree or chew on the tree decorations.

The members of the Lake Monticello Fire Department ask you to avoid a disaster and follow these safety tips to keep your family safe and secure. **Always remember, in an emergency dial 911 and Do Not Call the Main Gate.**

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