

## **THIS HOLIDAY SEASON BE FIRE SMART**

For Release

*December 4, 2020*

The Christmas Holiday will soon be here and while Christmas trees and decorations add to the holiday spirit, they pose a risk of fire and injury to many, especially children. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), Christmas trees are a major source of fuel in a fire. Nearly one-third (29%) of U.S. home fires that begin with Christmas trees occur in January. One of every 52 reported home Christmas tree fires result in a death compared to one death per 135 total reported home fires.

### **Safety Tips**

#### **Christmas Trees**

- Natural trees always involve some risk of fire. To minimize the risk:
  - **ALWAYS** get a fresh tree and keep it watered.
  - **DO NOT** put the tree within 3 feet of a heat source, i.e. fireplace, space heater, radiator, candles, heat vents or lights.
- **NEVER** use lit candles to decorate the tree.
- **ALWAYS** turn off Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.
- **DO NOT** burn tree branches, treated wood or wrapping paper in a home fireplace.
- Remove your tree after Christmas or when it is dry.
  - Dried-out trees are a fire danger and should not be left in the home, garage or placed outside against the home.

#### **Holiday Lights & Decorative Lighting**

Holiday lights and decorative lighting add a festive touch during the holiday season; yet:

- More than one of every four Christmas tree fires is caused by electrical failures or malfunctions.
  - Use lights that are UL approved; some lights are for outdoor use and some are for indoor use.
  - Replace lights that are worn, have broken cords or loose bulb connections.
  - Read the manufacturer's instructions on the number of strand lights to connect.
- Decorative fires are often started due to a form of heat source such as a candle or equipment that were too close to something that could burn.
  - Of these fires, three of every five (60%) were candles.
  - The two peak days for home candle fires are Christmas and Christmas Eve.

#### **Holiday Decorations**

The Fire Marshal's Office recommends not using candles as a holiday decoration but use battery operated candles as a substitute for real candles; however, should you choose to use real candles, please take the following precautions:

- Put candles in a sturdy metal, glass, or ceramic holder.
- Keep candles at least 12 inches from anything that burns.
- **NEVER** leave a candle unattended.
- Blow out candles after use and before going to bed.
- **NEVER** leave a lit tree or other decorative lighting displays unattended.
- **TURN OFF ALL** decorations before leaving the house or going to bed.
- Inspect and replace lights with exposed or frayed wires, loose connections, and broken sockets.
- **DO NOT** overload extension cords or outlets.
- **DO NOT** run an electrical cord under a rug.
- Decorate with children in mind. **DO NOT** put ornaments that have small parts or metal hooks, or look like food or candy, on the lower branches where small children can reach them.
  - Keep near each phone the number of the **National Poison Center (800) 222-1222**.
- Trim protruding branches at or below a child's eye level and keep lights out of reach.

#### **Holiday Plants – Decorative but Toxic**

Holiday plants such as Poinsettias, Mistletoe, Holly, Amaryllis, Daffodils, Cyclamen, Jerusalem Cherry, and English Ivy may enliven a room, but they are poisonous to humans and/or pets. When displaying these types of plants, place them in locations that can be admired from a distance yet, unattainable to children and pets.

Chief Tim Keen, of the Prince William County Fire & Rescue System, would like to remind residents that holidays were designed for memorable moments spent with family and friends and not visits to the emergency room. Make your holiday a cherished and memorable holiday by preparing and implementing proper precautions.

For more information regarding holiday safety, visit the National Fire Protection Association [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org) and the U.S. Fire Administration [www.usfa.fema.gov/](http://www.usfa.fema.gov/).

Follow us and like us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/PWCFireRescue/>,  
Twitter <https://twitter.com/pwcfirerescue> or visit our website at [www.pwcgov.org/fire](http://www.pwcgov.org/fire).