

# Holiday Fire Safety

Each year fires associated with the holiday season injure 1200 individuals and cause over \$25 million in damage. Special fire safety precautions need to be taken when keeping a live tree in the house. A burning tree can rapidly fill a room with fire and deadly gases. Follow these safety precautions to reduce the risk of an electrical fire in your home during the holiday season:

## Holiday Trees

- Needles on fresh trees should be green and hard to pull back from the branches, and the needle should not break if the tree has been freshly cut.
- The tree trunk should be sticky to the touch.
- Old trees can be identified by bounding the tree trunk on the ground. If many needles fall off, the tree has been cut too long, has probably dried out, and is a fire hazard.
- Do not place your 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 for longer than two weeks.
- Keep the tree stand filled with water at all times.
- Never put tree branches or needles in a fireplace or woodburning stove. When the tree becomes dry, discard it promptly.
- The best way to dispose of your tree is by taking it to a recycling center or having it hauled away by a community pick-up service.

## Holiday Lights

- Maintain your holiday lights. Inspect them each year for frayed wires, bare spots, gaps in the insulation, broken or cracked sockets and excessive kinking or wear before putting them up.
- Use only lighting listed by an approved testing laboratory.
- Do not overload electrical outlets. Do not link more than three light strands, unless the directions indicate it is safe.
- Connect strings of light to an extension cord before plugging the cord into the outlet.
- Make sure to periodically check the wires - they should not be warm to the touch.
- Do not leave holiday lights unattended.

## Holiday decorations

- Use only nonflammable decorations.
- Keep decorations away from heat vents.
- Never put wrapping paper in a fireplace. It can throw off dangerous sparks and produce a chemical buildup in the home that could cause an explosion.
- If you are using a metallic or artificial tree, make sure it is flame retardant.

## Candle Care

- Avoid using lit candles. If you do use them, make sure they are in stable holders and place them where they cannot be easily knocked down.
- Never leave the house with candles burning.

- Never put lit candles on a tree.
- Do not go near a holiday tree with an open flame - candles, lighters, or matches.
- Have working smoke alarms.