

CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



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Fire Safety Urged with Christmas Trees Water is the Key to a Safe Tree

SACRAMENTO - Christmas trees are a popular holiday decoration this time of year, but fire officials warn that Californians must take several steps to ensure they don't become an increased fire hazard inside the home. In mere seconds, a fire can spark and quickly engulf a Christmas tree.

"The holiday season brings an increase of hazards into the home," said State Fire Marshal Tonya Hoover, CAL FIRE – Office of the State Fire Marshal. "The key to a safe Christmas tree is keeping it watered and away from heat sources."

Christmas tree safety begins when you purchase your tree. When selecting a tree from a sales lot, do the "tap test", lift the tree up and tap it on the ground. If any needles fall off, it's already too dry and you should look for another tree. Cut trees can need as much as a gallon of water a day to help keep them from drying out too fast. Having your tree located too close to heat sources dries the tree quicker, making it a greater fire hazard.

Here are some additional fire safety tips:

- Choose a fresh tree with green needles.
- Recut the trunk at least two inch above the old cut as soon as you get it home. This allows it to continue to pull moisture into its foliage.
- Keep the trunk in water immediately after it is recut. Moisture is the key to keeping the tree fresh and thereby enhancing its fire resistance. If the tree will be kept outside for a few days, stand it in a bucket of water until you are ready to bring it indoors.
- Check the water levels daily... Never let the water level go below the bottom of the trunk. Commercial floral preservatives can also be added to the water to help keep the tree fresh.
- Locate any tree at least 3 feet away from sources of heat. Avoid placing any tree, live or artificial, near a heater outlet, wood stove or fireplace. If tree does dry out and become a hazard remove it from the home even if it's not yet Christmas. It's not worth the risk.
- Never place tree where it blocks exits.
- Use only UL approved and properly operating/maintain lights on trees. Don't overload outlets or light sets by connecting too many together. Use multi plug circuit type plug to prevent heat build up.
- Remove the tree immediately after the holidays. Even a properly cared for live tree will eventually die. Take it to a recycle center or leave for your refuse collector.

For more Christmas tree and holiday decoration fire safety tips visit the CAL FIRE website at www.fire.ca.gov.

Chief Pimlott and the men and women of CAL FIRE wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season.

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