



Travis County Fire Marshal's Office

Hershel Lee, Fire Marshal
P. O. Box 1748, Austin, Texas 78767
(512) 854-4621, fax (512) 854-6471

Dec. 3, 2014

Tips to prevent Christmas decoration fires

While decorating for Christmas and enjoying the holidays, keep safety in mind. Live Christmas trees can pose a serious fire risk if safety precautions are not followed. Make your family's holiday safe by following these Christmas decoration safety tips:

- Do not purchase a tree that is dry or dropping needles. Check for fresh, green needles.
- Place your tree in a sturdy tree stand designed not to tip over, and check the tree daily to make sure it has water in its stand. (Dry trees are highly flammable.)
- Make sure the tree is at least three feet away from any heat source, such as fireplaces and radiators. Place the tree near an outlet, so that cords are not running long distances.
- Always use lights that are Underwriters Laboratories (UL) approved. Some lights are designed only for indoor or outdoor use, but not both. Larger tree lights should also have some type of reflector rather than a bare bulb.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions on how to use tree lights. Do not use strings of lights with worn, frayed or broken cords or loose bulb connections.
- Connect no more than three strands of push-in bulbs and a maximum of 50 screw-in bulbs.
- Always unplug Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.
- Bring outdoor electrical lights inside after the holidays to prevent hazards.
- Never use lit candles to decorate a tree, and make sure any lit candles in the room are placed well away from tree branches and flammable items.
- Children are fascinated by Christmas trees. Keep a watchful eye on them when around the tree, and do not let them play with the wiring or lights. Store matches and lighters up high and out of reach.
- Safely dispose of the tree when it begins dropping needles. Do not leave dry trees in a house or garage or placed against the house.

Media: Please call the Fire Marshal's Office for interviews or questions at 512-854-4621.

###