

CHRISTMAS TREE SAFETY

November 2009

FIREFIGHTER TRAINING

Firefighter Daily Quick
Drills - Easy Access to
Training Topics

Facts and Safety Tips for Christmas trees

References:

**NFPA Home Christmas tree
and Holiday light fires** ,
Marty Aherns Nov 2007
Fire Safety Tips –
FamilyEducation.com
**North Carolina Fire
Prevention Code 2009 Ed**
Section 806

1. Christmas Tree Fires
 - a. Between 2002 and 2005 there were an average of 24 deaths per year related to Christmas Tree fires
 - b. Break down of causes
 - i. 48% - Electrical problems
 - ii. 27% - Too close to a heat source
 - iii. 15% - Candles
 - c. While the number of Christmas Tree related fires is relatively low the risk of death is unusually high.
2. Choosing a live Christmas Tree
 - a. "Fresh" cut – Always pick a tree that is freshly cut
 - b. Test the tree by tapping it against the ground
 - i. If only a few needles fall off it is fairly fresh
 - ii. If a large amount of needles fall off it is too dry
 - c. The needles are hard to pull from the branches and do not break when bent between your fingers
 - d. The trunk of the tree is sticky with resin
3. Placing your Christmas Tree
 - a. Place the tree away from fireplaces and radiators
 - b. Cut the trunk at least one-half inch above the original cut – keep water at least 1 inch above the highest cut end
 - c. Clean debris regularly
4. Decorating your Christmas Tree
 - a. Check all lights for defects
 - i. Compromised insulation
 - ii. Broken light bulbs
 - iii. Exposed wiring
 - b. Never use more than 3 standard sets of lights per extension cord
 - c. Only use non-combustible or flame resistant decorations

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5. Christmas Trees in Commercial Buildings
 - a. Natural cut trees are prohibited in the following occupancies: A, E, I-1, I-2, I-3, I-4, M, R-1, R-2 and R-4
 - b. Natural cut trees are allowed in the following occupancies when protected by a sprinkler system installed per NFPA 13 or NFPA 13R:A, E, M, R-1 and R-2
 - c. Supportive Devices shall comply with the following
 - i. The device shall hold the tree securely and shall be of adequate size to keep from tipping
 - ii. The device shall be capable of holding a 2 day water supply
 - iii. The water level when full shall be a minimum of 2 inches above the cut and the water level shall be checked at least once daily
 - d. The tree shall be removed from the building whenever the needles fall off readily when a branch is shaken or if the needles are brittle and break when bent between the fingers
 - e. Artificial Trees shall meet the requirements of NFPA 701
 - f. Christmas trees shall not obstruct any portion of the required means of egress
 - g. Lighting
 - i. The use of unlisted electrical wiring is prohibited
 - ii. The use of any electrical wiring on metal trees is prohibited

The following links show how quickly a fire can spread through a dry Christmas tree:

<http://www.fire.gov/flashover/FR4010.PDF> - Test report

<http://www.fire.gov/flashover/Flashover.mpg> - Video

<http://www.residentialfiresprinklers.com/blog/residential-fire-sprinkler-demonstration-on-christmas-tree-fire/>