

IIABA And Trusted Choice Holiday Fire Safety Tips



Approximately 30 million people will celebrate the holiday tradition of buying and decorating a real Christmas tree this year, and thousands more will adorn artificial trees. With such high-value items present, a house fire originating from a Christmas tree can often result in thousands of dollars in losses, even if the fire is localized. Having the proper insurance is the only way to protect the most frequent victim of Christmas tree fires--your new, valuable possessions. Experts agree that most of these fires can be easily prevented. People need to be cautious and use common sense when buying and decoration cut Christmas trees. Many people tend to get wrapped up in the holiday season and purchase their tree too early, leaving it exposed and without water for days or weeks.

Christmas Tree Selection and Decorating Safety Tips:

- Choose a fresh tree. A fresh tree does not burn easily. Many consumers are not aware that trees are often cut several weeks before they arrive on Christmas tree lots for sale to the consumer. To ensure freshness, consumers may want to cut a tree themselves for a “choose-and-cut” lot or use a live tree they can plant in their yard after the holidays.
- Do a freshness test on pre-cut trees. Gently grasp a branch between your thumb and forefinger and pull toward you. Very few needles should come off in your hand.
- Don’t leave a cut tree unsheltered and out of water.
- Just before you set up your tree, make a fresh straight cut across the base of the trunk to improve the tree’s water absorption.
- Water your tree every day with fresh tap water only. A tree will absorb as much as a gallon or more of water in the first 24 hours and one or more quarts a day thereafter. A seal of dried sap will form over the cut stump in four to six hours if the water drops below the base of the tree, preventing it from absorbing water.
- Choose only fire-retardant artificial trees.
- Keep your tree away from heat sources like fireplaces and vents.
- Watch for unsafe electrical cords and plugs. In combination with poorly maintained trees, a single spark from a faulty plug can be costly or even deadly.
- Use safe, cool burning tree lights, designed for interior use. Make sure all lights are Underwriters Lab approved. Test all light cords, extension cords and connections before hanging them. Never use outdoor lights on your tree.
- Avoid commercial fire retardants. Some actually increase the rate of moisture loss from a tree.
- Always unplug tree lights before leaving home or going to sleep.
- Never use candles to decorate a tree.
- Safely dispose of your tree as soon as it begins dropping needles. Dry trees are very dangerous.

