

## S.C. Office of State Fire Marshal Offers Seasonal Safety Tips

The S.C. Office of State Fire Marshal offers the following seasonal safety reminders for natural cut Christmas trees, holiday decorations and proper usage of candles.

tree

### Usage of Natural Cut Trees

For many families, the holiday wouldn't be complete without a natural cut tree gracing the family room and filling the home with a natural and fresh Christmas scent.

When you bring your Christmas tree home, it's important to keep the tree watered at all times. A fresh, well-watered tree will not burn as easily. Under favorable conditions, Christmas trees should last inside safely several weeks. When a tree ceases to "drink" water, or needles break, brown or fall off, it should be removed from the house.

### Holiday Decorations: Be Safe and Beautiful

Beautiful decorations are traditional in the lives of South Carolinians," said State Fire Marshal John Reich, who also is Deputy Director of the LLR Division of Fire and Life Safety. "But it is more important to know that holiday decorations lead to added fire risks if safety precautions are not followed."

### Decorating safety tips:

- Don't block exit doors with a Christmas tree or decorations.
- Secure natural cut trees in a sturdy tree-stand. Check and maintain the water level daily.
- Discard damaged sets of lights, which may have loose connections, broken or cracked sockets, and frayed or exposed wires.
- Use "cool lamp" holiday lights for inside use that have been approved by a nationally recognized testing laboratory such as UL or FM.
- Disconnect decorative lights when you leave your home or retire for the evening. Dispose of the tree when the needles begin to break, turn brown or fall from the tree. This is a sign the tree is dangerously dry and creating a hazard.

### Safe Candle Use

Candles have become an increasingly popular decoration. Reich indicates candle usage in the home is on the increase, ultimately increasing the number of home fires. Two out of five candle-caused home fires start in the bedroom.

"Candles, as pretty as they may be, are a growing cause of home fires and home fire deaths," Reich said.

To encourage fire safety, Reich offers the following tips:

- Place candles on stable furniture in sturdy holders that won't tip over.
- Keep candles away from clothing, books, paper, curtains, Christmas trees and holiday decorations.
- Extinguish candles when leaving a room or going to sleep.
- Discard taper and pillar candles once they are within two inches of the holder.
- Discard votive and filled candles before the last half-inch of wax starts to melt.
- Never put candles in windows or near doorways where drafts could bring flammable materials in contact with the open flame.
- Avoid using candles for light sources during power outages.

### Although highly discouraged, if you must use candles in the bedroom:

- Keep candles at least one foot from bedding, curtains, blinds, wallpaper, upholstered furniture and other combustible materials.

- Place candles away from table edges.
- Don't allow children or teens to burn candles.
- Supervise children around burning candles. Remember, candles are not toys.

## **Special Holiday Gift**

This season purchase a life-saving holiday gift.

"It is difficult to pick the perfect present, especially for those who have everything," Reich said. "A new smoke alarm could be the gift of life for those who may encounter a fire in the coming year."