



State Fire Marshal Reminds Citizens of Holiday Season's Unique Fire Risks

State Fire Marshal Stephen K. Woltz is urging Ohio families to pay close attention to fire safety this holiday season. During the 2005 holiday season, two deaths and more than \$200,000 in damages were reported in Ohio as a result of fires starting on and around Christmas trees. Three factors pose an especially increased fire threat during the holidays – decorative lighting, live Christmas trees and unattended children.

DECORATIVE LIGHTING

- Purchase lights that bear the label of a nationally recognized testing laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL), and use according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Do not connect too many light sets together, and install light sets outside the home only if they are specifically labeled for outside use. Outdoor lights should be fastened with hangars, not staples, and should be placed on a ground fault interrupter circuit when possible.
- Use the correct wattage replacement bulbs and replace light sets and extension cords that are worn or cracked. Use as few extension cords as possible. Do not run them under rugs or over sharp objects.
- Decorative candles should be secured and kept away from material that could easily ignite. Candles should be extinguished before leaving the house or going to bed.

LIVE CHRISTMAS TREES

Live Christmas trees should be as fresh as possible. Make a fresh cut at the base of the trunk and place in a sturdy stand. Place the tree as far away from heat sources as possible and water it daily. Do not block your primary or alternative escape routes.

Selecting a Tree

- Make sure the needles are flexible and hard to pull off the branch. The needles should not break off easily on a fresh cut tree.
- The trunk should be sticky to the touch.
- If you bounce the tree trunk on the ground and a lot of needles fall off, the tree has been cut too long ago and has probably dried out. It is a fire hazard.

Caring for Your Tree

- Cut about an inch off the bottom of the trunk before placing it in a tree stand.
- Keep the tree stand filled with water and check the water level daily.
- Place your tree away from any heat source, including a heat vent, fireplace or space heater.
- Never place any lit candles near the tree or anywhere near the area where the tree may fall if knocked over by a pet or child.

continued...

Tree Decorations

- Before placing lights on the tree, inspect them for frayed wires, bare spots, gaps in the insulation, broken or cracked sockets and excessive kinking or wear.
- Do not overload electrical outlets or connect more than three light stands together. Follow the manufacturer's recommendation for connecting lights.
- Do not leave holiday lights on unattended. Turn them off when you leave your home or go to bed.
- Use only non-flammable decorations.

Disposing of Your Tree

- When the tree becomes dry, discard it promptly.
- The best way to dispose of your tree is by taking it to a recycling center or having it hauled away by a community pick-up service.
- Never put tree branches or needles in a fireplace or wood-burning stove. It can cause a creosote build-up in the chimney, which is a fire hazard.

UNATTENDED CHILDREN

Children need to be warned to stay away from matches, candles and decorative lighting. Younger children should be supervised at all times in rooms where candles are in use.

- Ensure that every family member has practiced and is familiar with your home escape plan and that each person knows two ways out of every room in the house.
- Make sure that all smoke detectors in your home are operational. Don't be tempted to borrow detector batteries. Ideally, every Ohio household should have a smoke detector on each level of the house and inside each bedroom