

Decorate safely this holiday season

With the holiday season in full swing, State Fire Marshal Jim Walker urges citizens to remember fire prevention when decorating and entertaining.

From 2010 through 2014, there were 2,899 residential fires in Oregon during the holiday period from November 22 through January 15. These fires resulted in nine deaths, 154 injuries, and more than \$54.8 million in property loss.

"This season is a busy and exciting time of year, but don't let that distract you from keeping your family and friends safe from fire," says Walker. "By following a few important prevention tips for Christmas trees, decorations, and candles, you can help ensure your holidays remain happy."

Tree care and decorating tips:

- Choose a fresh, healthy tree with a deep-green color and flexible needles.
- When you get the tree home, cut off the bottom two inches of the trunk. This creates a fresh, raw cut for the tree to soak up water.
- Water your tree daily. A tree may consume between a quart and a gallon of water per day.
- Place the tree at least

three feet away from any heat source such as a fireplace, woodstove, space heater, heating vent, baseboard heater, or radiator.

- Use only noncombustible or flame-resistant materials to trim a tree.
- Always unplug tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.
- If using a woodstove or fireplace, keep it screened at all times. Keep ribbons, boughs, and other decorative materials at least three feet away.

• After the holiday season or whenever your tree dries out, promptly dispose of it and other dry greenery. Burning a tree in a stove or fireplace is extremely dangerous; proper disposal includes recycling or pick-up by a disposal service.

• Never burn wrapping paper in the fireplace or wood stove. Wrapping paper burns at higher temperatures than wood and can cause a chimney fire.

Electrical safety

- Maintain your holiday lights. Inspect holiday lights each year for frayed wires, bare spots, and broken or cracked sockets.
- Do not overload electrical sockets. Do not link more than three light strands,

unless the manufacturer's directions indicate it is safe.

- Protect electrical cords from damage. To avoid shock or fire hazards, cords should never be pinched by furniture, placed under rugs, located near heat sources or attached by nails or staples.
- Make sure all extension cords and electrical decorations used outdoors are marked for outdoor use.

Candle safety

- Consider using battery-operated flameless candles, which can look and smell like real candles.
- Never leave a burning candle unattended. Extinguish candles when you go to bed, leave a room, or before leaving the house.
- Keep candles at least 12 inches away from anything that can burn. Keep candles at least one foot from combustibles including clothing, curtains, upholstered furniture, greenery, and decorations.
- Always use a sturdy non-combustible (metal, glass, or ceramic) candleholder. If a sturdy non-combustible

candleholder is not available, the candle can be placed on a non-combustible plate.

- Place candles out of reach of small children and pets.
- Avoid candles with items embedded in them such as twigs, flowers, or leaves. These items can ignite or even explode.
- Always use a flashlight — not a candle — for emergency lighting.

General fire safety

- Keep combustibles at

least three feet from heat sources.

- For increased protection, have working smoke alarms on every level of your home (including the basement), in each bedroom, and in the hallway outside each bedroom.
- Make a home fire-escape plan and practice it with your family and any overnight guests.
- Keep escape routes clear of clutter so you can escape quickly in case of fire.

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