

Christmas Tree Fire Safety



Carefully decorating Christmas trees can help make your holidays safer. A small fire that spreads to a Christmas tree can very quickly become large.

Facts & figures:

- Christmas trees were the items first ignited in an estimated average of 300 reported U.S. home structure fires per year in 2000-2004. These fires caused an average of 14 civilian deaths, 21 civilian injuries, and \$16.8 million in direct property damage per year. These statistics include both real and artificial trees.
- On average, one in every 22 reported home Christmas tree fires resulted in a death.
- More than four of every ten home Christmas tree fires are caused by electrical problems or malfunctions. One in four (24%) home Christmas tree fires resulted from a heat source placed too close to the tree. Six percent were started by children playing with fire.
- Holiday lights (or other decorative lighting with live voltage) were involved in 16% of the home Christmas tree structure fires. Fixed or portable space heaters were involved in 6% of these incidents. No equipment was involved in 47% of these fires.
- Candles were the heat source in 12% of the home Christmas tree fires per year between 2000 and 2004.
- Two-thirds of the home Christmas tree fires were reported in December, 20% were reported in January.
- During the same five-year period, 80 outside or unclassified fires began with Christmas trees, on average, per year. Two-thirds of these fires were intentionally set. Fifty-four percent of the outside and unclassified home Christmas tree fires occurred in January.

Source: *NFPA's One-Stop Data Shop* **Note:** These statistics are based on fires that started with Christmas trees and do not include fires starting with other products.

10 Tips for making your Christmas tree fire-safe

1. When decorating your tree, always use lights listed by a testing laboratory. Some lights are designed only for indoor or outdoor use, but not both. Larger tree lights should also have some type of reflector rather than a bare bulb.
2. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on how to use tree lights. Any string of lights with worn, frayed or broken cords or loose bulb connections should not be used. Connect no more than three strands of push-in bulbs and a maximum of 50 bulbs for screw-in bulbs.
3. Always unplug Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.
4. Bring outdoor electrical lights inside after the holidays to prevent hazards and extend their life.
5. Never use lit candles to decorate a tree, and make sure any lit candles in the room are placed well away from tree branches.



6. Try to keep live trees as moist as possible by giving them plenty of water daily. Do not purchase a tree that is dry or dropping needles. Check for fresh, green needles. And place your tree in a sturdy tree stand designed not to tip over.
7. If you purchase an artificial tree, be sure it is labeled as fire-retardant.
8. Children are fascinated with Christmas trees. Keep a watchful eye on them when around

the tree and do not let them play with the wiring or lights. Store matches and lighters up high, out of reach, preferably in a locked cabinet.



9. Make sure the tree is at least three feet (one meter) away from any heat source, such as fireplaces and radiators. Try to position the tree near an outlet so that cords are not running long distances. Do not place the tree where it may block exits.
10. Safely dispose of the tree when it begins dropping needles. Dried-out trees are highly flammable and should not be left in a house or garage, or placed against the house.