

# Holiday Fire Safety

## A Fire Safety Message from the New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control

*Make the holiday season a happy time by practicing these safety habits.*

The holidays are a time to enjoy family and friends and reflect on those things that are the most important to each of us. There should be nothing more important than providing a safe and secure home for your family. By following these simple, but often overlooked, safety tips you will be well on your way to a safe and happy holiday season.

### 1 Christmas Trees

- **Artificial Trees** -- When purchasing an artificial tree, look for one labeled "Fire Resistant." Although this label does not mean the tree won't catch fire, it does indicate the tree will resist burning and should extinguish quickly.
- **Selecting a Live Tree** – Needles on fresh trees should be green and hard to pull back from the branches. The needles should not break if the tree has been freshly cut. Old trees can be identified by bouncing the tree on the ground. If many needles fall off, the tree has been cut too long, has probably dried out and is a fire hazard.
- **Caring for your tree** – Do not place the tree close to a heat source, including a fireplace or heat vent. The heat will dry out the tree, causing it to be more easily ignited by heat, flame or sparks. Do not put your live tree up too early or leave it up for too long. Keep the tree stand filled with water at all times.
- **Disposing of the tree** -- Never put tree branches or needles in a fireplace or wood burning stove. When the tree becomes dry, discard it promptly. The best way to dispose of your tree is to take it to a recycling center or having it hauled away by a community pick-up service.

### 2 Decorations

- Follow the manufacturer's instruction on how to use tree lights. Any string lights with worn, frayed or broken cords or loose bulb connections should not be used. Never use electric lights on a metal tree.
- Unplug Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to sleep.
- Never use lit candles to decorate a tree.
- If you use candles to decorate a room, make sure they are in stable holders and placed them where they cannot be easily knocked over. Never leave a burning candle unattended.
- All holiday decorations should be nonflammable or flame-retardant and placed away from heat vents.
- Never put wrapping paper in a fireplace, it can throw off dangerous sparks and produce intense flames that can cause a chimney fire.

### 3 Guests

- Keep your family and overnight guests safe with a working smoke alarm on every level of your home, in every bedroom, and in the halls adjacent to the bedrooms. Test smoke alarms monthly and replace batteries at least twice a year.
- Overnight guests should be instructed on the fire escape plan and designated meeting place for your home.



*"Prevention Through Education"*