

Seasonal Fire Safety Tips from Your Local Fire Marshal

The holiday season is a time for celebration, but fire hazards from Christmas trees and other decorations can dampen the festive spirit.

The East Hampton Fire Marshal would like to remind residents to properly care for and decorate Christmas trees, and to practice fire safety in order to prevent yuletide emergencies.

- If a household holiday display includes a natural tree, keep the tree adequately watered. Improper care and decoration of live or artificial Christmas trees can lead to catastrophic fires. It takes only seconds for a tree to ignite and the entire room to become engulfed in flames.
- 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 a natural tree is by taking it to a recycling center or having it hauled away by a community pick-up service.
- When selecting a Christmas tree, needles on fresh trees should be green and hard to pull from the branches, and the needle should not break if the tree has been freshly cut. The trunk should feel sticky to the touch.
- Old trees can be identified by bouncing the tree trunk on the ground. If many needles fall off, the tree has been cut too long, has probably dried out and is a fire hazard.
- Do not put a natural tree up too early or leave it up for longer than two weeks. Keep the tree stand filled with water at all times.
- Keep Christmas trees away from heat sources including fireplaces and heat vents. The heat will dry out the tree, causing it to be more easily ignited by heat, flame or sparks. Be careful not to drop or flick cigarette ashes near a tree.
- Inspect holiday lights each year for frayed wires, bare spots, gaps in the insulation, broken or cracked sockets, and excessive kinking or wear before putting them up. Use only lighting approved by UL.
- Do not link more than three light strands into a single electrical outlet, unless the directions indicate it is safe. Connect strings of lights to a UL approved multi-outlet power strip before plugging the cord into the outlet. Make sure to periodically check the wires; they should not feel warm to the touch.
- All decorations should be nonflammable or flame-retardant, and artificial or metallic trees should also be flame-retardant.

Make sure you have working carbon monoxide detectors and smoke alarms

Your local Fire Marshal wishes you a happy and safe holiday season. For more information you may contact the East Hampton Fire Marshal at 860-267-0088.