

# Holiday Safety



**Keep holiday decorating safety in mind this holiday season :National Fire Protection Association and Underwriters Laboratories urge safe decorating practices**

(NORTHBROOK, Ill. ) *November 20, 2007* — With more than 32 million homes decorating real [Christmas trees](#) this season, according to the National Christmas Tree Association (NCTA), there is no doubt that this holiday season will bring cheer. While it's easy to get caught up in the holiday shuffle of dinners, gifts and travel, safety should be at the top of everyone's lists.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and Underwriters Laboratories (UL), an independent safety testing organization, are partnering this season to remind consumers about the importance of safe holiday decorating habits.

Keeping fresh Christmas trees well-watered is not only vital to the tree's decorative longevity, but also to keeping consumers safe this holiday season. If ignited, a dry tree can become engulfed in flames in a matter of seconds, as opposed to a well-watered tree, according to NCTA. With so many people decorating trees for the holidays, this safety detail is more important than ever.

“Because many trees have been dormant for a couple months, it's typical for them to absorb most of their water within six to eight hours after being brought into a warm home. Families should make a fresh cut to the trunk and place the tree in water as soon as possible once getting it home,” said Beth Walterscheidt, a tree farmer from Texas and president of NCTA. “Trees that are kept fresh during the holiday season are extremely difficult to ignite, which is why it is critical for consumers to commit to the care of their Christmas tree. If the water level falls below the cut surface for more than four to six hours, the tree's ability to keep absorbing moisture is inhibited.”

In addition to keeping trees watered daily, John Drengenberg, consumer affairs manager for UL, reminds consumers to dispose of them after four weeks.

“If you put up your Christmas tree right after Thanksgiving, it needs to be taken down the week after Christmas,” Drengenberg said. “After New Year's, even well-watered trees can become a fire hazard.”

On average, real and artificial Christmas trees are the first items ignited in an estimated 210 home fires annually, according to the most recent NFPA statistics. While this represents a small portion of the estimated 85 million households that display a tree, consumers need to commit to taking care of a fresh tree, and keep flame sources away from plastic trees, to reduce the risk of their tree being involved in a home fire.

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“Christmas Day holds the record for the highest number of reported home candle fires,” said Lorraine Carli, vice president of communications at the NFPA. “Consumers should keep in mind that if they’re going to use candles, they need to place them away from things that can burn. It is also important to keep candles away from children and pets to avoid the risk of having them accidentally tipped over.”

NFPA also reports that candles caused an estimated 15,600 home structure fires reported to local fire departments in just one year. These fires caused an estimated 150 deaths, 1,270 injuries and \$539 million in direct property damage.



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Because of this high risk, UL and the NFPA urge people to practice a few safety precautions before, during and after their celebrations.

- Regularly check your tree for fresh, green needles. Trees that have dried out over several weeks burn faster than fresh, well-watered trees. Remember to keep your tree watered at all times.

- Always keep candles, as well as matches and lighters, out of the reach of children, and don't leave children unattended in a room with lit candles.



- Look for the holographic UL Mark on light strings and electrical decorations. The UL Mark means that UL engineers have tested samples of the product for safety hazards.

Green holographic UL Mark = Indoor-only use

Red holographic UL Mark = Indoor and outdoor use

- Carefully inspect each electrical decoration - new or old - before plugging it in. Cracked sockets, frayed, bare or loose wires can cause a serious electric shock or start a fire. Replace damaged items with new, UL-Listed decorations.

- Take down holiday lights after 90 days of use to prevent damage from weather conditions and neighborhood animals.

