

Christmas Tree Safety

Preparing and caring for your LIVE Christmas TREE

First Step to having a Christmas Tree that is fire safe is choosing the right tree. Inspection is essential in finding a tree that is healthy. Your tree must pass the freshness test. Once you pick a tree shake it, if a fair amount of needles that are discolored fall out of the tree this is the first sign that the tree has lost a significant amount of moisture. The needles of a tree should be flexible and dark green in color. If the needles are discolored and/or break easily the tree has been standing too long.

To test the tree, grasp one of the tree's branches gently, moving your hand slowly across its length. If the needles pop off easily, the tree is dehydrated. This is a sign that the tree has lost 20% of its moisture and will continue to dry out. Once a tree has become dehydrated it cannot recover even with watering. The tree has lost its ability to efficiently and thoroughly absorb water and it is a FIRE HAZARD!

A tree that passes the freshness test will be a safer tree and will still have the ability to absorb water from the stump to the top of the tree and to the tip of its branches.

To keep your tree in good condition takes care when transporting it. If you are going to put it on the top of your vehicle point the base forward to protect the top. Wrap it up in burlap or place a tree bag around it to protect it from drying out in on the way home.

Water is a trees best friend and the best way to prevent a tree fire. In order to keep it at its freshest, heed the following advice:

Until you are ready to move your tree in to its place in your home, keep it outside, preferably sheltered from the wind and direct sun. A garage, unheated porch, or patio area serves this purpose well. If you have wrapped it up to transport it makes sure you unwrap it as soon as you get home.

When you are ready to move the tree indoors make an angled cut across the trunk about an inch from the original base, the fresh cut will help the tree absorb more water. Immediately place the tree in a container of water. It will be very thirsty, so you will want to be sure to keep the water level above the trunk cut. Check the water in your tree stands every day. A healthy tree can drink a gallon or more of water every day. Just one day without water causes the exposed trunk to seal up with sap, you will have to make another cut to avoid drying out the tree and having it become a holiday fire hazard. Fresh, well-watered trees are less likely to catch on fire.

Keep your tree away from areas that will dry it out, such as fireplaces, radiators, space heaters, and heat vents. Try to avoid direct sunlight. Check the lights for your tree, if they are worn or have any breaks in the cords, replace them. Make sure the lights you have on your tree are UL tested. Try to purchase lights that produce low heat, such as miniature lights. Never, never, never use lit candles as tree ornaments. Keep your tree a good distance away from candles. Never leave candles unattended, your tree's lights on while you sleep, or when you are out of the house.