

Give Residents Dos & Don'ts for Christmas Tree Safety

The tips in this letter were compiled with the help of Nancy Campbell, Fire Education Coordinator of the Oregon State Fire Marshal's Office. Distribute this letter several weeks before Christmas. It provides tips to help your residents choose, care for, and dispose of their trees safely.

CHRISTMAS TREE SAFETY

Dear Resident:

You may be considering setting up a Christmas tree this year. Please remember that although trees are beautiful, they can also pose a fire hazard if not chosen or cared for properly. Here is a list of dos and don'ts to help you manage your Christmas tree safely. Best wishes for a happy holiday season!

The Management

CHOOSING A CHRISTMAS TREE

DO

- ✓ Buy a tree about a week before Christmas. This way it should be fresh on Christmas Day.
- ✓ Pick the greenest tree possible.
- ✓ Check needles on the tree. Crush some in your hand. If they spring into shape, the tree is fresh.
- ✓ If you are buying an artificial tree, look for a label that says "UL" or "FL," which indicates that it has been approved by Underwriters' Mutual Laboratories or Factory Mutual Laboratories. These designations mean that the tree is fire resistant.

DON'T

- ✗ Don't buy a tree more than a week before Christmas. It will be dried out by the time the holidays arrive.
- ✗ Don't buy a tree that looks brown or reddish. This means the tree is dried out.
- ✗ Don't buy a tree if the needles fall off when you bend them.

CARING FOR & DECORATING YOUR TREE

DO

- ✓ Make a cut at a 45-degree angle in the trunk of the tree one inch above the original cut. This allows more water to go up the tree's trunk and keep it fresh. If you do not have a saw to make the cut, ask the lot attendant where you buy the tree to make the cut for you.
- ✓ Mount the tree firmly in a tree stand that holds water.
- ✓ Give the tree at least a quart of water every day for the first few days you have it. Add a tablespoon of sugar to the water. This helps the moisture to spread. Thereafter, water the tree daily.
- ✓ Keep the tree away from radiators, stoves, fireplaces, and any source of heat or open flame.
- ✓ Use only small, "twinkle" lights. These lights do not generate heat. Look for a "UL" or "FL" label.
- ✓ Check tree lights for frayed wires and damaged plugs. If you find any defects, throw the lights away. If you hear

a crackling sound after plugging in a string of lights, the string is unsafe and should be thrown away.

- ✓ Use noncombustible decorations. These include tinsel, ornaments, and "spray snow."
- ✓ Keep the area around the tree clear of any wrappings and boxes the decorations were packed in, as well as gift wrapping, ribbons, etc., from opened gifts.
- ✓ Turn off the tree lights before you go to bed and before you leave the house.

DON'T

- ✗ Don't block exits with the tree.
- ✗ Don't put the tree in a corner. If a fire starts, two walls will be ignited at once.
- ✗ Don't run wires under rugs.
- ✗ Don't overload electrical outlets and plugs.
- ✗ Don't use lighted candles on trees or near other decorations.
- ✗ If your artificial tree is made of metal, don't put any electric lights on it. Use a spotlight or reflective lights.

DISPOSING OF THE TREE

DO

- ✓ Keep your tree for about two weeks. If you keep it much longer, it will become too dry.
- ✓ Check the needles on the tree. Once you start seeing many of them on the floor, it is time to get rid of the tree. It is too dried out.
- ✓ Sweep up needles from the floor.
- ✓ Tie the tree in twine. Check with the manager to find out when and where you should leave the tree so it can be picked up for trash collection.

DON'T

- ✗ Don't leave the tree outside your door or in a stairwell.
- ✗ Don't dump your tree on the sidewalk in front of the building. Children may be tempted to start a fire. Find out from the manager or staff where to leave the tree.