



BLOOMINGTON FIRE DEPARTMENT



It takes less than 30 seconds for a dry tree to engulf a room in flames, according to the Building and Fire Research Laboratory of the National Institute for Standards and Technology. "They make turpentine out of pine trees," notes Tom Olshanski, spokesman for the U.S. Fire Administration. "A Christmas tree is almost explosive when it goes."

To minimize risk, buy a fresh tree with intact needles, get a fresh cut on the trunk, and water it every day. A well-watered tree is almost impossible to ignite. Keep the tree away from heat sources, such as a fireplace or radiator, and out of traffic patterns. If you're using live garlands and other greenery, keep them at least three feet away from heating sources.

No matter how well the tree is watered, it will start to dry out after about four weeks, Olshanski says, so take it down after the holidays. Artificial trees don't pose much of a fire hazard; just make sure yours is flame-retardant.



The incidence of candle fires is four times higher during December than during other months. According to the National Fire Protection Association, four of the five most dangerous days of the year for residential candle fires are Christmas/Christmas Eve and New Year's/New Year's Eve. (The fifth is Halloween.)

To reduce the danger, maintain about a foot of space between the candle and anything that can burn. Set candles on sturdy bases or cover with hurricane globes. Never leave flames unattended. Before bed, walk through each room to make sure candles are blown out. For atmosphere without worry, consider flameless LED candles

Holiday Safety Tips

Cooking is the top cause of holiday fires, according to the USFA. The most common culprit is food that's left unattended. It's easy to get distracted; take a pot holder with you when you leave the kitchen as a reminder that you have something on the stove. Make sure to keep a kitchen fire extinguisher that's rated for all types of fires, and check that smoke detectors are working.

If you're planning to deep-fry your holiday turkey, do it outside, on a flat, level surface at least 10 feet from the house.

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