Holiday Fire Safety

During the holidays, offices and homes are more susceptible to fire than at any other time of the year. For your safety and that of your colleagues, loved ones, and friends, Environmental Health & Instructional Safety encourages you to follow the tips outlined below:

Christmas Trees

Christmas trees can be one of the most hazardous items you bring into your office or home. A dry Christmas tree can be totally engulfed in fire within three seconds, generating enough heat to ignite in less than one minute the furnishings and window coverings in an entire room.

Live Christmas trees brought to campus must be sprayed with a fire retardant.

A Christmas tree purchased from a lot or cut on a tree farm can remain relatively fire-resistant if you follow these simple steps:

Make a Fresh Cut

- Make a fresh cut at the base on a diagonal in order to open up pores clogged by sap. Cut off 2-3 inches. The fresh-cut surface should be creamy white. Otherwise, the tree will not be able to absorb water.

Initial Watering

- After the cut is made, put the tree in water immediately to increase absorption. Hot water should be used for the first filling.
- Choose a sturdy stand which holds at least one gallon of water.
- Rinse the tree stand with a mixture of one capful of bleach and one cup of water before inserting the tree. This rinsing reduces the growth of microorganisms that can block the tree's ability to absorb water.
- If the tree is not going into use soon after purchase, it should be stored in a bucket of water in a cool place away from wind and sun.

Water Daily

- An average tree may consume between a quart and a gallon of water per day.
- If the water level drops below the cut end of the trunk, a seal will form and no water will be absorbed by the tree. So don't forget to add water every day!

Mini-Lights Produce Less Heat
Always check lights for frayed or cracked wiring and broken sockets before placing the lights on a tree. Do not attempt to repair a broken light set.

- Avoid overloading circuits.
- Turn off tree lights when leaving the office and home, and overnight.
- Miniature lights produce less heat and reduce the drying effect.

Keep Away from Heat Sources

- Place the tree away from heat sources such as heating vents, fireplaces, wood stoves, radiators, television sets, or sunny windows.
- Be careful not to block exit ways with the tree, or with re-arranged furniture.

Remove the Tree Promptly

- After Christmas, remove the tree from the house before it dries.

All these tips apply to flame retardant treated trees, as well as to untreated trees.

*Wishing you a safe and happy holiday season from the staff of Environmental Health & Instructional Safety!*