



For Immediate Release

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State Fire Marshal's Office
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Date: December 2, 2019

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'Tis the Season...for Decorating Safely!

Olympia – Twinkling lights, beautiful garlands, and giant Christmas trees...nothing spreads cheer quite like holiday decorations. However, Christmas trees, candles, and decorations can create safety hazards. The State Fire Marshal's Office urges Washingtonian's to practice fire-safe behaviors this holiday season.

Although Christmas tree and holiday decoration fires are uncommon, they are far more dangerous than other types of fires. According to the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS), over the past five years in Washington State, **one in every 42 residential fires caused by Christmas trees or holiday decorations resulted in a civilian death**, compared to one death per 108 fires from other causes. Washington's rate of death per fire caused by decorations is higher than the national average of one death per 157 fires, reported by the National Fire Protection Association.

Reduce your risk of fire this holiday season with the following tips:

- If you choose an artificial tree, make sure it is labeled as fire retardant.
- If you choose a live tree, select one with fresh, green needles that do not fall off when touched. Water it daily and get rid of it when it is dry. Never put tree branches or needles in a fireplace or wood burning stove.
- Place Christmas trees and decorations at least three feet away from any heat source, such as fireplaces, radiators, candles, heat vents, or lights.
- Use lights labeled by an independent testing laboratory.
- Replace any string of lights with worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections. Read manufacturer's instructions for the number of light strands to connect.
- Choose decorations labeled as flame resistant or flame retardant.
- Keep lit candles away from decorations or other flammable items. Do not leave lit candles unattended.
- Some lights are only for indoor or outdoor use, not both.
- Turn off all light strings and decorations before leaving home or going to bed.
- Use clips, not nails, to hang lights so the cords do not get damaged.

For more information on holiday fire safety and prevention, visit the SFMO's website at <http://www.wsp.wa.gov/prevention-data-collection/> or follow us on Twitter @wafiremarshal.

The State Fire Marshal's Office is a Bureau of the Washington State Patrol, providing fire and life safety services to the citizens of Washington State including inspections of state licensed facilities, plan review of school construction projects, licensing of fire sprinkler contractors and pyrotechnic operators, training Washington State's firefighters, and collecting emergency response data.