



Washington State Patrol

STATE FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

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For Immediate Release

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Government and Media Relations

State Fire Marshal's Office
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Date: November 25, 2024

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Holiday Safety First: Your Guide to a Merry and Safe Celebration

Olympia – As the festive season approaches, it's crucial to prioritize fire safety in our homes to ensure joyful and worry-free holidays for families everywhere. According to the United States Fire Administration, almost one-third of residential Christmas tree fires are caused by electrical problems. Candles and open flames are also a major source of fire incidents. In 2023, fire agencies in Washington State reported candles and open flames caused over \$57 million in property loss. Exercise care and caution while setting up trees, candles, and other decorations to prevent fire incidents that could disrupt your celebrations.

The State Fire Marshal's Office (SFMO) offers the following fire safety tips:

1. **Do not overload electrical outlets or extension cords:** Follow manufacturer's instructions when using extension cords and holiday lights. Look for labeling on these devices from an independent testing laboratory.
2. **Dispose of Damaged Cords:** Do not use cords or light strands that have frayed or exposed wires.
3. **Keep Natural Trees Healthy:** If you have a natural Christmas tree, check it daily to ensure it has water. Dry Christmas trees burn quickly in the event of a fire.
4. **Keep Decorations Cool:** Keep trees and decorations away from heat sources to prevent combustion.
5. **Consider Candle Alternatives:** When decorating, battery-operated candles are a safer option and can often mimic the appearance and smell of wax candles very well.
6. **Establish a Safe Cooking Area:** When preparing holiday meals, keep towels, dish towels, and potholders away from the stovetop, and never leave cooking food unattended. It is best to keep kids out of the cooking area.
7. **Create an Emergency Plan:** Develop and practice a fire escape plan with your family, ensuring everyone knows how to safely exit the home in case of an emergency.
8. **Call 911 for emergency assistance.**

For more information, contact the SFMO at (360) 596-3904.

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. These services include public education, licensing and certification of the fire sprinkler, fireworks, and cigarette industries, data collection and analysis, fire and life safety inspections for state facilities, plan review of school construction projects, all-risk mobilization of statewide fire service resources, hazardous materials training, and the training and certification of firefighters.

www.wsp.wa.gov/state-fire-marshals-office/