

## **HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM THE PENN WYNNE FIRE COMPANY!**

No matter which of the many December holidays you and your family celebrate, the holiday season is a time to share with your family and friends. The best way for you to enjoy a safe holiday is to be *safe*.

So, without further ado, here are some safety tips:

A real tree can add to the spirit of Christmas by filling your home with beauty and the scent of pine. Unfortunately, a real tree can also pose a fire hazard. Each year, more than 400 residential fires involve Christmas trees and tragically nearly 40 deaths and 100 injuries result from those fires. There is also about \$10 million in property damage and loss. In addition, there are more than 13,000 candle-related fires each year, which result in 140 deaths and \$205 million in property loss.

Select a fresh tree by looking for one that is green. The needles of pines and spruces should bend and not break and should be hard to pull off the branches. Run your hand down a branch, you should not come away with a handful of needles. On fir trees, a needle pulled from a fresh tree will snap when bent, much like a fresh carrot. Also, look for a trunk sticky with sap. Cut off about two inches of the trunk (the people you buy this from will probably do this for you). Put the tree in a sturdy, water-holding stand. Keep the stand filled with water so the tree does not dry out quickly. Make sure your tree is not thirsty! Generally, each day your tree will "drink" a quart of water for every inch of trunk diameter. (For example, a tree with a 4" diameter will use 1 gallon of water per day for the first several days.) Stand your tree away from fireplaces, radiators and other heat sources. Place a fire extinguisher near your tree for additional safety.

If you use an artificial tree, choose one that tested and labeled as fire resistant. Artificial trees with built-in electrical systems should have an Underwriters Laboratory (UL) label. Purchase a tree that is labeled "Fire Resistant." Although this label does not mean the tree won't catch fire, it does indicate the tree will resist burning and should extinguish quickly. Never use electric lights on a metallic or metal-framed tree. Faulty lights can charge the tree with electricity, possible resulting in electrocution.

While it seems pretty obvious, only use indoor lights indoors (and outdoor lights only outdoors). Look for the UL label. Check lights for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections. Given how cheap lights are now, if you find a problem, throw the set away. Check the capacity of your outlets and extension cords before you plug in your lights. Don't exceed the manufacturer's recommendations, or the voltage or wattage information on the UL label. Most mini-bulbs are 2.4 volts. Multiply 2.5 times the number of lights (i.e. 2.5 x 48 lights = 120) to figure out how many you can plug into a standard 120 volt outlet.

Don't overload your electrical circuits and turn off all lights on trees and decorations when you go to bed or leave the house. Outdoor electric lights and decorations should be plugged into circuits protected by ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) to protect against electric shock. Portable outdoor GFCIs can be purchased where electrical supplies are sold. GFCIs can also be installed permanently to household circuits by a qualified electrician.

Use only non-combustible or flame-resistant materials to trim a tree. Choose tinsel or artificial icicles of plastic or nonleaded metals. Leaded materials are hazardous if ingested by children.

Keep burning candles within sight. Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens. Always use non-flammable holders, and place candles out of reach of children and pets. Never place burning candles near curtains, plants, flowers or other flammable objects.

In homes with small children, take special care to avoid sharp or breakable decorations, keep trimmings with small removable parts out of the reach of children who could swallow or inhale small pieces, and avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food that may tempt a child to eat them.

To avoid eye and skin irritation, wear gloves when decorating with spun glass "angel hair." To avoid lung irritation, follow container directions carefully while decorating with artificial snow sprays. Remember, the propellant in most spray cans is ignitable. Don't spray near open flames.

While we certainly don't want to "Grinch" up your holidays, the safer you are, the happier we all will be.

At the end of the holiday season, DO NOT burn your tree in the fireplace! Dry Christmas trees burn very hot and extremely fast. Lower Merion Township will provide free tree removal in the weeks after the holiday season.

**Have a safe and happy holiday season from our house to yours!**

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