



# City of Gastonia Fire Department

## Life Safety Division



*Dedicated to Saving  
Lives & Property through  
Code Enforcement & Education*

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### CHRISTMAS TREE SAFETY

Holiday decorations are beginning to grace the rooms of homes and businesses everywhere, with lights twinkling and greenery draped across mantels and doorways. As the holiday season kicks off and preparations keep everyone busy, don't overlook important safety precautions to control holiday hazards.

According to the NC State Fire Marshal's Office, North Carolina has an average of 100 residential fires caused by holiday decorations. Residents must take care to prevent open flames or heat sources from igniting combustible holiday materials. Wrapping paper, ribbons, greenery and bows are all in ready supply during this time of year, along with candles, fires and power cords.

#### **According to the US Fire Administration:**

The leading area of origin for Christmas tree fires and associated losses was the living room, den or family room.

Roughly one-third of Christmas tree fires were started by bulbs, lamps or lighting, and one-quarter were started by cords or plugs.

16% of the fires occurred because a heat source was too close to the Christmas tree and 9% started by children (or others) playing with fire or another heat source.

#### **Selecting a Christmas Tree**

Choose a fresh tree. To ensure freshness of the tree, grasp a branch and pull firmly towards you allowing the branch to slip through your hand. If lots of needles fall off, the tree is too dry and should not be purchased.

A real tree should not lose green needles when you tap it on the ground.

Cut off about 2 inches of the trunk and put the tree in a sturdy, water-holding stand. Water the tree daily so the tree does not dry out. The stand should hold at least 1 gallon of water.

Place the tree 5 feet from fireplaces, radiators, kerosene heaters, the television and any other heat source that might dry it out. Make sure the tree does not block foot traffic or doorways.

#### **Lights:**

**Use only UL-approved lights and cords.** Inspect strands of lights for exposed or frayed wires, loose connections, or broken sockets. Use the rule of thumb of only one plug per outlet – do not overload an extension cord with lights. Do not use more than 3 strings of light on one circuit. Don't run extension cords under carpets, across doorways or near heaters.

Use only indoor lights indoors.

If a bulb burns too hot to touch, it is too hot to be on the tree.

Never use candles, even on artificial trees.

**Unplug tree lights and snuff candles when you go to bed or leave the house.** Some mistakenly believe the smell of smoke will wake them in the event of a fire; however, most fire-related fatalities occur between 2 and 6 a.m. Smoke and gases from a fire can cause a deeper sleep and cause you to be trapped inside a burning home.

Unplug all lights before leaving the home or going to sleep.

### **Christmas Tree Tips for Kids:**

Teach your children how to care for a Christmas tree by assigning them to be a “Tree Guardian.” This is a fun and easy way for kids to be responsible for ensuring the safety of their tree and the home.

The Tree Guardian should make sure that the tree is:

- Fresh at the time of setup
- Not blocking exits
- Away from direct heat sources
- Secured to prevent tipping
- Not “thirsty” (water level in the stand is high enough)
- Not preventing access to emergency equipment

**MAKE SURE THERE IS A WORKING SMOKE DETECTOR AND CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTOR ON EVERY FLOOR IN YOUR HOME!**