

# AROMAS TRI-COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

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The **Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District** wants you to be aware of potential hazards during the holidays. Read the recommendations below to have a safe and happy Holiday Season.

## Dry Tree vs. High Moisture Tree Fire

Decorating homes and businesses is a long-standing tradition around the holiday season. Unfortunately, these same decorations may increase your chances of fire. Based on data from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), an estimated 250 home fires involving Christmas trees and another 170 home fires involving holiday lights and other decorative lighting occur each year. Together, these fires resulted in 21 deaths and 43 injuries. Following a few simple fire safety tips can keep electric lights, candles, and the ever popular Christmas tree from creating a tragedy. Learn how to prevent a fire and what to do in case a fire starts in your home. Make sure all exits are accessible and not blocked by decorations or trees. Help ensure that you have a fire safe holiday season.

## Christmas Trees

What's a traditional Christmas morning scene without a beautifully decorated tree? If your household includes a natural tree in its festivities, take to heart the sales person's suggestion – "Keep the tree watered."

Christmas trees account for hundreds of fires annually. Typically, shorts in electrical lights or open flames from candles, lighters or matches start tree fires. Well-watered trees are not a problem. A dry and neglected tree can be.

## Selecting a Tree for the Holidays

Needles on fresh trees should be green and hard to pull back from the branches, and the needles should not break if the tree has been freshly cut. The trunk should be sticky to the touch. Old trees can be identified by bouncing the tree trunk on the ground. If many needles fall off, the tree has been cut too long and, has probably dried out, and is a fire hazard.

## Caring for Your Tree

Do not place your tree close to a heat source, including a fireplace or heat vent. The heat will dry out the tree, causing it to be more easily ignited by heat, flame or sparks. Be careful not to drop or flick cigarette ashes near a tree. Do not put your live tree up too early or leave it up for longer than two weeks. Keep the tree stand filled with water at all times.

## Disposing of Your Tree

Never put tree branches or needles in a fireplace or wood-burning stove. When the tree becomes dry, discard it promptly. The best way to dispose of your tree is by taking it to a recycling center or having it hauled away by a community pick-up service.

## Holiday Lights

### **Maintain Your Holiday Lights**

Inspect holiday lights each year for frayed wires, bare spots, gaps in the insulation, broken or cracked sockets, and excessive kinking or wear before putting them up. Use only lighting listed by an approved testing laboratory.

### **Do Not Overload Electrical Outlets**

Do not link more than three light strands, unless the directions indicate it is safe. Connect strings of lights to an extension cord before plugging the cord into the outlet. Make sure to periodically check the wires – they should not be warm to the touch.

**Do not leave holiday lights on unattended!**

## Holiday Decorations

### **Use Only Nonflammable Decorations**

All decorations should be nonflammable or flame-retardant and placed away from heat vents. If you are using a metallic or artificial tree, make sure it is flame retardant.

### **Don't Block Exits**

Ensure that trees and other holiday decorations do not block an exit way. In the event of a fire, time is of the essence. A blocked entry/exit way puts you and your family at risk.

### **Never Put Wrapping Paper in the Fireplace**

Wrapping paper in the fireplace can result in a very large fire, throwing off dangerous sparks and embers that may result in a chimney fire.

## Candle Care

### **Avoid Using Lit Candles**

If you do use lit candles, make sure they are in stable holders and place them where they cannot be easily knocked down. Never leave the house with candles burning.

### **Never Put Lit Candles on a Tree**

Do not go near a Christmas tree with an open flame – candles, lighters or matches.

**As in every season, have working smoke alarms installed on every level of your home, test them monthly and keep them clean and equipped with fresh batteries at all times. Know when and how to call for help. And remember to practice your home escape plan!**

Information provided from U.S.F.A. and the N.F.P.A  
Focus on Fire Safety: Holiday Fire Safety