



Enjoy Your Holiday Tree – Safely

Select a Safe Holiday Tree

- If you select a live tree, look for green, flexible needles that are hard to pull from the branches. Reject trees with any brittle, brown, or yellow needles. The trunk of a fresh tree will be sticky with resin. Bounce the trunk end of the tree on the ground; if many needles fall off, the tree is too dry and will be an extreme fire hazard.
- Don't buy or set up a fresh tree too early. Even well-watered trees dry out in a few weeks. The longer a tree is indoors, the drier it becomes.
- If you do not set up your tree right away, store it outdoors or in a porch or garage protected from wind and sun.
- Make a straight cut across the trunk about one inch from the end so that the tree can absorb water easily. Store the tree upright in a large container of water. Be sure the water level stays well above the cut end.
- If you choose an artificial tree, select one that is labeled as fire resistant or fire retardant.

Set Up Your Tree Safely

- Before you bring the tree into the house, cut another inch off the trunk and trim branches as needed.
- Place the tree securely into a sturdy stand of the proper size.
- Choose a stand with a wide base that will hold at least a gallon of water (one quart per stem inch).
- Choose a safe location for your tree where it is out of the way and not blocking exits.
- Use thin guy-wires to secure the tree to walls or ceiling.
- Never place the tree near a fireplace, woodstove, radiator, space heater, or heating vent. The heat will dry the tree very quickly and make it more likely to catch fire. Sparks or embers from a fireplace will ignite a tree in a matter of moments.
- As soon as the tree is in its final location, fill the stand with water. A tree will absorb a great deal of water during its first hours in the warm house, so check it a few times each day; refill as needed to keep the water level well above the cut end.

Keep Your Tree Fresh

- Check the water often; add water as needed to keep the level above the base of the trunk. During the first day or two, you may need to refill the reservoir several times, depending on the size of the tree and the room temperature. Use only fresh, plain water without additives.
- If the base of the trunk is left dry for more than a few hours, the tree's resin will seal off the cut trunk and prevent more water from being absorbed. If this happens, take down the tree, make a fresh cut, then set it up again.
- Check daily to see if the needles are still green and fresh. If the tree is dropping needles, this is a sign that it has dried out inside. At this point, it cannot be watered back to freshness.

Decorate Your Tree Safely

- Use only non-combustible decorations.
- Choose lights that bear the UL Mark from Underwriters Laboratories, showing that the products were tested for fire and shock hazards.
- Inspect the light strings before use, discarding any with cracked sockets; frayed, loose or bare wires; or loose connections. These defects can start a fire or cause a severe electric shock.
- To prevent overloads, do not connect more than three strings of push-in bulbs. For screw-in bulbs, the connected strings should have no more than fifty bulbs. If the cords are warm, turn them off.
- Never use lighted candles on a Christmas tree or near evergreen wreaths or other decorations.
- Never use electric lights on a metal artificial tree, as this will create an electrocution hazard. Instead, focus an indoor spotlight on the tree.
- Always turn off the tree lights when you leave home and before you go to bed each night.

Dispose of Your Tree Safely

- Take down your tree as soon as the holiday is over, or as soon as it begins to drop needles.
- Check with local officials about the best way to dispose of your tree.
- Never put tree branches or needles in a fireplace or wood burning stove.