

CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Amador-El Dorado Unit

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Christmas Tree Safety Tips

CAMINO – “A dry tree can become fully engulfed in flames in a matter of 3-5 seconds, in another 30-40 seconds everything in your room can be ablaze. To see a video on what a Christmas tree on fire can do, go to http://www.fire.nist.gov/tree_fire.htm it is a very sobering video” states Unit Chief Kelly Keenan of the Amador-El Dorado Unit of CAL FIRE who adds “Christmas trees cause approximately 240 house fires each year in this country resulting in \$16.7 million dollars in direct property loss. Although these types of fires are not common, when they occur they are costly and often deadly” cautions Chief Keenan. “Electrical problems caused one-third of these fires so check the wiring and lights carefully, making sure the lights are UL listed before placing them on the tree. Another 20% of these fires are caused by a heat source too close to the tree so be sure your tree is not too close to your fireplace, woodstove, space heater or any other heat source” adds Chief Keenan.

Life Saving Tips:

- ✓ If you purchase your tree from a lot or a local tree farm make sure it is treated with a fire retardant before bringing it home. Make a fresh cut (1-2 inches) at the base of the tree trunk and place it in a bucket with plenty of cool, fresh water (a tree can drink a gallon or more in the first 24 hours).
- ✓ When choosing a location for your Christmas tree, make sure it is away from all heat sources including your home heating system.
- ✓ Make sure your stand is the correct size for your tree and that it is clean before you place the tree inside it. A stand that is too small is prone to falling over.
- ✓ Once the tree is in the stand, water it DAILY! This will prevent the tree from drying out and becoming a fire hazard.
- ✓ Make sure every string of lights is UL listed and in good working order. Throw out any strings of lights that are damaged. If they feel warm after you plug them in they are NO good, throw them away.
- ✓ Do not overload your outlets. If you do not have enough outlets, use a good quality surge protector.
- ✓ NEVER leave the lights on your tree when you leave home or go to sleep.

For more information on other fire and life safety topics, please visit the CAL FIRE website at www.fire.ca.gov.

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