



News Release

OFFICE OF LOUISIANA STATE FIRE MARSHAL

Department of Public Safety & Corrections
Public Safety Services

8181 Independence Blvd.
Baton Rouge, LA 70806

VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.lasfm.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Deputy Chief Brant Thompson

Release#:

Office: (225) 925-3661

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Cell: (225) 247-6251

Proper Christmas Decorating Includes Being Safety-Minded

State Fire Marshal says, "Tis the season to be jolly...and safe!"

Baton Rouge, LA – The Christmas season ushers in excitement, joy and the accompanying adornment of countless homes and businesses with beautiful and decorative lighting displays, including the centerpiece of such festive affairs: the traditional Christmas tree.

And while no one likes a Scrooge, it must be stated that the increased use of electric lighting, decorations, displays, and candles are potential and devastating fire hazards—if one does not use extreme care, especially as it pertains to Christmas trees and lighting.

"Business owners must understand that there are officially-adopted state fire codes regarding the displaying of Christmas trees in stores and buildings that are designed to reduce the chances of fires starting," said State Fire Marshal H. "Butch Browning.

The Fire Marshal says, that business owners who adhere to the following requirements as to the proper and code-compliant methods of displaying Christmas trees help mitigate unnecessary holiday fire deaths and injuries:

- If artificial trees are to be used, only those that are labeled as "flame-retardant" are permitted.
- Electrical lighting is permissible for decorating any type of tree as long as it is "approved," which means the lighting has been tested and accepted by a national testing laboratory such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL).

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- If a live tree is to be used, there are three (3) legally acceptable possibilities:
 1. An “uncut” tree with its roots still attached.
 2. A "cut" tree that has been treated with an approved flame-retardant flocking material.
 3. An untreated "cut" tree with no lights and where the watering of the tree is maintained at the discretion of the owner as to when it (i.e., tree) is to be removed.
- Approved lighting can be used on either an "uncut" tree or a "cut" tree that has been treated with a flame-retardant material.
- The **only** exception when lighting can be used on an untreated “cut” tree is in a building with a fully automatic, and properly functioning, fire sprinkler system.

As for homeowners, the State Fire Marshal recommends these precautions to help insure maximum fire and life safety:

- Faulty and/or unmaintained wiring and overloaded electrical outlets are one of the most common causes of house fires. If a fire starts as a result of your wiring, **any tree—live or artificial—will burn.**
- When buying a tree, make sure that the needles do not easily fall out when you shake the tree or grab its branches. These types of trees tend to dry out very quickly, meaning they are more susceptible to burn more easily.
- All “live” trees will eventually dry out, but daily or consistent watering greatly aids in slowing its drying.
- Only use safe and tested electrical decorations and/or displays. For example, do not use lighting designed specifically for outdoor use to decorate indoors and **NEVER** use lit candles as lighting in any tree.
- Keep all holiday decorations and trees at least three (3) feet away from open flames, fireplaces, or other heating sources.

For additional information concerning fire safety regulations you may visit the State Fire Marshal’s website at www.lasfm.org or you may contact your local fire department.

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