



CITY OF SEBASTOPOL



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FIRE DEPARTMENT INFORMATIONAL HANDOUT

Handout FD-10
Revised 12/01/15

SEBASTOPOL FIRE DEPARTMENT

HOLIDAY FIRE SAFETY

Sonoma County, CA – 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 prevent a tragedy and help ensure a happy and safe holiday.

Christmas Trees. If your household includes a natural tree in its festivities, **keep the tree watered.** Christmas trees account for hundreds of fires annually. Well-watered trees are not a problem; however, 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. Old trees can be identified by bouncing the tree trunk on the ground. If many needles fall off, it's a sign that the tree was cut long ago 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. 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.

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.

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.**

For more information on holiday fire safety, or other fire safety and prevention information, please contact Fire Chief Bill Braga at (707) 823-8061