



News Release

Office of the Louisiana State Fire Marshal
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CHRISTMAS TREE DISPLAYS IN COMMERCIAL OCCUPANCIES

With the onset of the holiday season, it's important to focus on fire safety and prevention. The celebration of the season brings with it increased usage of electric lights, decorations, candles, and the ever popular Christmas tree, all of which can be potential fire hazards. By following general fire safety precautions, potential holiday fires, deaths, and injuries remain preventable.

As we enjoy the holiday season, State Fire Marshal H. "Butch" Browning wishes to remind business people of the legal way to display Christmas trees. State Fire Marshal Browning says that "legally adopted state fire codes require commercial occupancies to comply with the following Christmas tree display regulations":

If artificial trees are to be used, only trees that are labeled as flame-retardant are permitted. Approved electrical lighting is permissible. "Approved" means tested by a national testing laboratory such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL).

If a live tree is to be used, there are three (3) legally acceptable possibilities:

1. A "cut" tree that has been treated with an approved flame-retardant flocking material.
2. An "uncut" tree with its roots still attached.
3. An untreated "cut" tree with no lights where water is maintained is at the discretion of the owner as to when it is to be removed.

Approved lighting can legally be used on either an "uncut" tree or a "cut" tree that has been treated with a flame-retardant material. Approved lighting CANNOT be used on "cut" trees that have not been treated with a flame-retardant material except in a building with a fully automatic sprinkler system.

The State Fire Marshal has no legal jurisdiction in one (1) or two (2) family dwellings, but recommends these requirements for those dwellings to insure maximum fire and life safety:

- Faulty wiring and overloaded electrical outlets are one of the most common causes of seasonal house fires. It doesn't matter if the tree is artificial or real, if a fire sparks due to your wiring, the tree will still burn.
- When buying a tree, make sure that the needles don't fall out when you bounce it on the ground. These types of trees tend to dry out very quickly, meaning they will also burn quickly.
- Be sure to keep your live tree watered so it does not dry out.
- Only use safe decorations. Do not light your tree with candles or lights designed specifically for outdoor use.
- Keep all holiday decorations away from open flames, fireplaces or other heating sources.

Questions about this release should be made to the local State Fire Marshal's Office or to the local Fire Department or Fire Prevention Bureau.

"Safety Never Takes A Holiday - Safety 1st Again in 2010"