



For Immediate Release

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‘Tis the Season to Decorate Safely

State Fire Marshal offers tips for keeping home and family safe for holidays

(Jackson)- Mississippians show their holiday spirit with colorful lights, and decorated Christmas trees. While decorations bring great joy to many, Commissioner of Insurance and State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney reminds everyone that from the standpoint of fire safety, the holidays are also the time people need to be most fire safety conscious.

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.

“Observing a few, simple, common sense fire safety steps will help keep your holidays safe and happy,” Chaney said.

This is the time, when more than any other time of the year, that there are more electrical fires, more cooking fires, and more heating fires. The State Fire Marshal’s Office reminds citizens that the display of Christmas trees and heavy usage of decorative lights and other electrical appliances greatly adds to the risk of home fires.

When decorating for the holidays, the State Fire Marshal’s Office offers these holiday decorating fire safety tips:

- Fresh live trees should be placed in a stable stand that holds water -- remember to water the tree frequently. **As a general rule, stands should provide 1 quart of water per inch of stem diameter.**
- Shedding needles indicate a dry tree that acts as a fire hazard.
- If you are using an artificial tree, verify that it is fire-retardant by checking its label.
- Trees should be placed away from direct sources of heat, especially those that produce sparks or open flames, such as a fireplace.
- Ensure that trees and other holiday decorations do not block an entry/exit way.

- Only non-combustible decorations should be used on trees, and light sets should be checked for any signs of damage or wear. Only use UL approved lights.
- Never use candles on a tree.
- Never run electrical cords through doorways or under carpets.
- Do not overload electrical outlets.
- Always unplug lights before leaving or going to bed.
- Make sure that homes have at least one operational smoke detector and fire extinguisher.
- Businesses, university offices and work spaces should remove all trees and decorations prior to the closing of these areas for the holidays.

For more fire safety information and tips for the upcoming holiday season, visit the special “Holiday Fire Safety” web page on the Mississippi Insurance Department website at www.mid.state.ms.us. (Look for the link in the notifications tab) You can also find the Mississippi State Fire Marshal’s Office on Facebook and follow them on Twitter at twitter.com/msfiresafe.

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