



For Immediate Release

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State Fire Marshal Recommends Holiday Decorating with Fire Safety in Mind

(Jackson)- This Christmas, hanging the stockings by the chimney is not the only holiday decorating that needs to be done with care. Tis' the season of ornament-laden Christmas trees, brightly colored lights and decorations. Commissioner of Insurance and State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney recommends that everyone decorate for the holidays with fire safety in mind.

"First, never hang a stocking or anything flammable near an open flame such as a fireplace as it is a fire hazard," Chaney said.

"More than any other time of year, this is when people need to be the most fire safety conscious and take steps to avoid the risks of electrical, cooking and heating fires"

Simple, common sense fire safety steps will keep you and your family safe this holiday season.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), between 2005-2009, U.S. fire departments responded to an average of 240 home fires that started with Christmas trees per year. These fires caused an average of 13 deaths, 27 injuries, and \$16.7 million in direct property damage annually.

Christmas tree fires are not common, but when they occur, they are likely to be serious. On average, one of every 18 reported fires that began with a Christmas tree resulted in death. A heat source too close to the Christmas tree started one of every five (20%) of these 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 @MSInsuranceDepartment Twitter followers, the department will begin tweeting the “12 Days of Christmas Fire Safety”, tips at least once each day until Christmas.

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.ms.gov. (Look for the link in the notifications tab).

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