



For Immediate Release

December 9, 2011

State Fire Marshal Recommends Decking the Halls the Fire Safety Way

(Jackson)- As Mississippians display their holiday spirit through ornament-laden Christmas trees, brightly colored lights and decorations, Commissioner of Insurance and State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney recommends that everyone should deck their halls with fire safety in mind.

“This is the time of year people need to be most fire safety conscious, observing simple and common sense fire safety steps to keep you and your family safe this holiday season,” Chaney said.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated annual average of 240 home structure fires that began with Christmas trees in 2005-2009. Holiday or other decorative lights with line voltage were involved in an average of 150 home structure fires per year and in one of every six (17%) of those types of fires, Christmas trees were the item first ignited.

“More than any other time of year, there are more electrical fires, more cooking fires, and more heating fires,” Chaney said.

“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.

###