



For Immediate Release

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When Decorating for the Holidays State Fire Marshal Says Keep Fire Safety in Mind

(Jackson)- This Christmas, when hanging the stockings by the chimney with care, Commissioner of Insurance and State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney recommends that everyone decorate for the holidays with fire safety in mind.

“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,” Chaney said.

The National Fire Protection Association reports that in 2007-2011, U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated annual average of 230 home structure fires that began with Christmas trees. Although these fires are not common, when they do occur, they are likely to be serious. On average, one of every 40 reported home structure Christmas tree fires resulted in a death compared to an average of one death per 142 total reported home structure fires.

One-third of Christmas tree structure fires involved electrical failures or malfunctions. Nearly 20 percent of these structure fires occurred because some type of heat source was too close to the tree.

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

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” this week.

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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