



## OREGON

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### **For Immediate Release**

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### **State fire marshal urges citizens to put fire safety at the top of their holiday lists**

With the holiday season in full swing, State Fire Marshal Mark Wallace cautions everyone to keep fire safety in mind when decorating and entertaining.

“This should be a happy and exciting time of year, but don’t let that distract you from keeping your family and friends safe from fire,” says Wallace. “By following a few important safety tips for Christmas trees, decorations, and candles, you can help ensure your holidays remain happy.”

From 2006 through 2010, Oregon fires related to Christmas trees and decorations resulted in one death, 10 injuries and more than \$3.4 million in property loss. Candle-related fires during this period caused even more damage. From 2006 through 2010, there were 406 candle-related fires in Oregon causing 11 deaths, 89 injuries, and more than \$10.8 million in property loss.

#### **Tree care and decorating tips:**

- **Choose a fresh, healthy tree with a deep-green color and flexible needles.**
- **When you get the tree home, cut off the bottom two inches of the trunk.** This creates a fresh, raw cut for the tree to soak up water.
- **Water your tree daily.** A tree may consume between a quart and a gallon of water per day.
- **Place the tree at least three feet away from any heat source such as a fireplace, woodstove, heating duct, or radiator.**
- **Keep lighted candles away from the tree.**
- **Use only noncombustible or flame resistant materials to trim a tree.**
- **Always unplug tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.**
- **If using a woodstove or fireplace, keep it screened at all times.** Keep ribbons, boughs, and other decorative materials at least three feet away.

- **After the holiday season, promptly dispose of the tree and other greenery before it dries out.** Burning a tree in a stove or fireplace is dangerous; proper disposal includes recycling or pick-up by a disposal service.
- **Maintain your holiday lights.** Inspect holiday lights each year for frayed wires, bare spots, and broken or cracked sockets.
- **Do not overload electrical sockets.** Do not link more than three light strands, unless the directions indicate it is safe.

### **Candle safety**

A safe alternative is to use battery operated, flameless candles which can look, smell, and feel like real candles. However, if you decide to use real candles, follow these safety tips:

- **Never leave a burning candle unattended.** Extinguish candles when you go to bed, leave a room, or before leaving the house.
- **Keep candles away from things that burn.** Keep candles at least one foot away from combustibles including clothing, curtains, upholstered furniture, greenery, and decorations.
- **Always use a sturdy non-combustible (metal, glass, or ceramic) candleholder.** Make sure the candleholder is big enough to catch dripping wax.
- **Place candles out of reach of small children and pets.**
- **Keep candles out of high traffic areas.**
- **Trim wicks to one-quarter inch before lighting.**
- **Avoid candles with items embedded in them such as twigs, flowers, or leaves.** These items can ignite or even explode.
- **Always use a flashlight – not a candle – for emergency lighting.**

### **General fire safety**

- Make sure you have working smoke alarms on every level of your home, outside each sleeping area, and in each bedroom.
- Make a home fire escape plan and practice it with the whole family.
- Keep escape routes clear of clutter so you can escape quickly in case of fire.

For more information on fire safety visit:

[http://www.oregon.gov/OSP/SFM/CommEd\\_FireSafety\\_Program.shtml](http://www.oregon.gov/OSP/SFM/CommEd_FireSafety_Program.shtml).

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