

ST. TAMMANY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT # 1

Fire Prevention Bureau

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Press Release

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Subject: Holiday Fire Safety

Christmas decorations that brighten your season also increase the risk of an unwanted fire and injury. St. Tammany Fire District #1 makes the following recommendations to lessen these risks.

Outdoor Safety Tips:

- * To reduce the risk of electrical shock when hanging holiday lights, use a dry wooden ladder and insulated staples that are hammered in rather than a staple gun.
- * Waterproof all electrical connections and keep them elevated so rain water will not drain into the connection and possibly cause a shock or short circuit.
- * Avoid standing in water while handling electrical wiring or when using power tools.
- * Shut off electrical power when replacing bulbs and electricity off while putting up and taking down holiday lighting.
- * Always use an extension cord that has a three (3) pronged plug (which is extension cord with a ground wire) that is approved by Underwriters Laboratory for outdoor use.
- * NEVER allow the bulbs to touch combustible material, such as plastics, leaves, grass, or pine needles.

Indoor Safety Tips:

- * Avoid buying Christmas trees with shedding needles as it is a sign that the tree is dry and a greater fire risk.

- * Cut two (2) inches from the base of the tree trunk so it can better absorb water.
- * Keep tree outdoors in a bucket of water for a few days before bringing it indoors to insure the tree has absorbed enough moisture to stay fresher. This will make it less of a fire hazard.
- * Install tree away from all heat sources, open flames and exits.
- * Replace any light string that has frayed or broken wires, loose connections, or broken or cracked sockets.
- * DO NOT overload extension cords, adapters, or outlets. Only one length of extension cord.
- * DO NOT place electrical cords where they would pose a tripping hazard.
- * DO NOT place electrical cords under rugs or carpet as walking traffic can weaken the insulation and increase the risk of fire and electrical shock.
- * DO NOT hang electric lights from a metallic tree because damaged insulation could electrically charge the tree and cause a shock or fire. Instead use colored spotlights above or beside the tree, but never on the tree.
- * Always unplug the tree lights when you leave the house or go to bed. These lights can also be set on a timer to automatically shut them off.

St. Tammany Fire District #1 recommends that all homes have a working smoke detector in each bedroom and one working smoke detector on each level of the home. Detectors should be tested once a month and the batteries should be replaced every six months. St. Tammany Fire District #1 also strongly urges all residents to have a fire escape plan. Fire escape plans should have two ways for every member of the household to escape and designate a place for everyone to meet. Fire drills should be held once a month.