

# **Christmas Tree Safety for the Holidays**

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Your guests have departed; the dishes are cleared away. Time to turn out the Christmas tree lights and go to bed. But is disaster lurking within your home? The first alert may be when the smoke alarm shrieks its warning at 4:00 a.m. If you don't have a working smoke detector, you may not wake up at all. Test your smoke detector regularly and make sure the battery has been recently replaced.

As a home inspector and firefighter with 20 years experience, I am often criticized for being picky about small, insignificant items such as poor wiring, lack of smoke detectors, fire stops and window sizing as not really meaning very much. When fire strikes many times these items make the difference between life and death. I have been to several Christmas Day fires including one where several people died, and can tell you, they do make the difference.

Christmas tree's can be a beautiful decoration but they can also be a fire hazard. Nationwide, we have had a drought and it's important that you make sure to buy a fresh tree. Needles on fresh trees should be green and hard to pull back from the branches, if the tree has been freshly cut. The trunk should be sticky to the touch. When you get your tree home cut ½" off the base of the tree and put it in a bucket of water for at least a day. When placing the tree in your home make sure it's not by any heater vents. Always keep the tree stand filled with water. Discard any broken or frayed sets of lights when decorating the tree. Always turn off lights on trees and other decorations when you go to bed or leave your home. A short circuit in any of this equipment could cause a fire. When you string the lights on your tree be careful to keep all bulbs turned away from gifts and paper ornaments. Lit candles should never be placed on or near the Christmas tree. When the tree starts to dry out, it's time to throw it away.

## **Don't invite disaster to your holiday celebrations**

Rick Bunzel has 20 years experience as a firefighter in New Jersey and California. He is currently a member of the Boulder Rural Fire Department. If you have questions or comments, Rick Bunzel can be contacted at Mountain View Property Inspections @ 303-443-9063 or [Rickbunzel@aol.com](mailto:Rickbunzel@aol.com)