10 Ways to Prevent Christmas Tree Fires

Your beautifully decorated Christmas tree can also be a deadly fire hazard. Christmas tree fires are infrequent, but when they do occur they are serious, according to the Nation Fire Protection Association (NFPA). On average, Christmas tree fires result in six fatalities and $18.3 million in property damage annually.

1. When choosing a tree, look for one that is fresh and has green needles that don't fall out. Browning needles mean the tree is dried out and more prone to catch fire.

2. Water your tree daily to prevent it from drying out.

3. Check the manufacturer's label to ensure you use only lights and decorations that are flame-retardant. Look for a nationally recognized testing laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL).

4. Check holiday lights for frayed wires or excessive wear.

5. Don't connect more than three strands of mini-string sets and a maximum of 50 bulbs for screw-in bulbs.

6. Keep your tree at least three feet away from any heat source such as a fireplace, radiator, candles or lights.

7. Make sure your tree is not blocking an exit.

8. Always turn off lights on a tree before going to bed or leaving your home.

9. Get rid of a tree when its needles start dropping. It means the tree is drying out.

10. Check that your smoke alarm is working properly.