

State Fire Marshal Advises Oregonians to Practice Safety with Holiday Decorations

by Bend Weekly News Sources

State Fire Marshal Nancy Orr urges everyone to follow a few important fire safety tips to help ensure Christmas trees and other decorations are kept away from sources of heat. From 2001 through 2005 Oregon Christmas tree fires resulted in one death and an estimated \$526,000 in property loss. Sources of heat causing these fires included open flames, overloaded wiring, heaters, woodstoves and fireplaces. "During the holidays, anticipated joy turns to unexpected grief and loss for those hit by residential fires," cautions Orr. "While people love the smell and look of fresh trees and holiday decorations, this vegetation may become a serious fire hazard. Once ignited, a dry tree may be engulfed by flame in as fast as fifteen seconds and the heat will ignite other items in the room." Remember these tree care and decoration tips:

- Choose a fresh, healthy tree with a deep-green color and flexible needles.
- Water 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 non-combustible 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 bows, 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 disposal service.

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 family 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 go to: http://www.oregon.gov/OOHS/SFM/Home_Fire_Safety_Campaign.shtml

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