

NFPA encourages prompt disposal of Christmas trees and safe removal of lights

January 3, 2017 – Dragging your heels on taking down the Christmas tree? Here's a fact that may motivate you: Nearly 40 percent of U.S. home fires that begin with Christmas trees occur in January. The [National Fire Protection Association](#) (NFPA) is strongly encouraging people to remove Christmas trees from their homes promptly after the holiday season.

Christmas trees are combustible items that become increasingly flammable as they continue to dry out," said Lorraine Carli, NFPA's vice president of Outreach and Advocacy. "The longer you keep a Christmas tree in your home, the more of a fire hazard it becomes."

NFPA statistics show that [Christmas tree fires](#) are not common, but when they do occur, they're much more likely to be serious. On annual average, one of every 34 reported home fires that began with a Christmas tree resulted in a death, compared to one death per 142 total reported home structure fires.

All Christmas trees can burn, but a dried out tree can become engulfed in flames in a matter of seconds," said Carli. "Sadly, over the past couple of years, we've seen incidents where Christmas tree fires have resulted in deadly consequences for multiple family members, including young children."

NFPA recommends using the local community's recycling program for tree disposal, if possible; trees should not be put in the garage or left outside.

The association also [offers these tips](#) for safely removing lighting and decorations and storing them properly to ensure that they're in good condition the following season:

- Use the gripping area on the plug when unplugging electrical decorations. Never pull the cord to unplug any device from an electrical outlet, as this can harm the wire and insulation of the cord, increasing the risk for shock or electrical fire.
- As you pack up light strings, inspect each line for damage, throwing out any sets that have loose connections, broken sockets or cracked or bare wires.
- Wrap each set of lights and put them in individual plastic bags, or wrap them around a piece of cardboard.
- Store electrical decorations in a dry place away from children and pets where they will not be damaged by water or dampness.

For more information on home fire safety all winter long, visit "[Put a Freeze on Winter Fires](#)," a winter safety campaign NFPA jointly promotes with the [U.S. Fire Administration](#).