

Christmas Tree Myths

MYTH 1: Christmas Trees can burst into flames in seconds.

A tree properly displayed in water contains moisture which makes it very difficult to ignite.



Decorated trees in water-holding stands absorb water.

MYTH 2: Artificial trees are safer because they are fire proof.



Although artificial trees have the words "Fire Retardant" on their packaging, there is no standard for "fire retardant" for artificial trees.

Artificial tree in burn test conducted by Farmington Hills, MI Fire Department.

NOTE: The National Fire Incidence Reporting System (NFIRS) reports do not distinguish residential fires where a real tree was the first item ignited and where an artificial tree was the first item.



Harvested trees baled and stored in shady area of farm await loading.

The National Christmas Tree Association is working to better educate our members and retailers in the importance of proper tree care from the farm to the customer. We have also developed a Tree Care for Consumers sheet for use by our retailers. We would like to encourage any group interested in a safe holiday to join with us in promoting holiday safety.

The leadership of NCTA believes it is collectively our responsibility to do everything possible to ensure consumers put a fresh, clean and safe tree in their homes.

Wholesale growers and retailers (whether traditional commercial lot operators or choose and cut farms selling pre-cut trees) should review the published tips for storage and display of cut trees.



Trees displayed properly at retail lot in warm climate on mulch, under partial shade.

Getting Facts to Consumers

Christmas Trees & Holiday Safety

National
Christmas Tree Association

A properly displayed Real Christmas Tree is very difficult to ignite.

Results of tests conducted by National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) in 1999, www.fire.nist.gov/tree_fire.htm, and again in January 2007 indicate that a tree maintained in water will not support combustion when the source of ignition is removed. These results agree with many other tests conducted by other organizations over the years.

Professional Christmas Tree farmers and retailers feel that educating consumers in the safe use of a Real Christmas Tree is a better way to promote Holiday Safety than the blazing tree shown in many pictures and videos supposedly promoting "holiday safety". In these demonstrations, they rarely state the previous care of the tree or the accelerant used to create the spectacular blaze.

To see a sample of a "safety" demonstration using an accelerant, go to <http://www.christmastree.org/safety.cfm>. The video clip is from *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*.

Our web site, www.christmastrees.org has detailed information on tree care. The following is a summary of some important issues which are often overlooked.

- Select a tree in good condition
- Make a fresh cut on the trunk and place in water within 6-8 hours
- If necessary to store temporarily, store in water in a cool location
- Display indoors in a stand adequate to hold the tree securely and with adequate water capacity – at least 1 quart for each inch of stem diameter. **THIS IS IMPORTANT!**
- Check the water level daily and replenish as needed to maintain the water level above the bottom of the tree trunk
- Display tree away from heat sources that may cause tree to dry
- Use only listed lights that produce low heat
- Inspect lights before using and replace if wiring is worn or frayed
- Do not overload electrical circuits
- Monitor tree for freshness. If it becomes dry, remove it from home immediately and dispose of properly.



Christmas Tree Safety Facts

- From 1980 to 2004, the number of fires involving all Christmas trees, real and artificial, has decreased dramatically
- In 2004, less than 0.001% of all trees used were the item first ignited in home fires.
- For the period 2000-2004, of all of the fires where any type of Christmas tree was the item first ignited,
 - 44% of the fires involved some type of electrical failure or malfunction
 - 24% of the fires were caused by the tree being too close to some type of heat source
 - 6% were the result of someone, typically a child, playing with fire or other heat source.
- Many people and organizations have contributed to the results achieved in the reduction of the number of fires from 1980 to the present.

The above data presents a tremendous opportunity to reduce Holiday fire risk by educating consumers on the proper selection and maintenance of Real Christmas Trees.