



## SAFETY TIPS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Each year, thousands of people are treated in hospital emergency rooms for injuries related to holiday decorations or gifts. In addition, decorative trees, wiring, and lighting are the direct cause of approximately 500 fires annually, resulting in an average of \$20 million in property loss and damage each year.

As the holidays approach, New Jersey City University Public Safety Department are urging people to eliminate potential dangers from holiday decorative trees, wiring, and lighting that could produce fires or injuries. Decorating our homes for the holidays is a beautiful tradition, and to ensure that this holiday season is a safe and happy one, the Public Safety Department is releasing the following safety tips:

### DECORATIVE TREES

- When purchasing an artificial tree or decorative vegetation it should be flame resistant or flame retardant. This should be documented and certified by the manufacturer in an approved manner (label or certificate). Although this label does not mean the tree won't catch fire, it does indicate the tree will resist burning and should extinguish quickly.
- When purchasing a natural tree, check for freshness. A fresh tree is green, needles are hard to pull from branches, and when bent between your thumb and index finger, the needles do not break. The trunk butt of a fresh tree is sticky with resin, and when bounced on the ground, the tree should not lose many needles. The tree should be checked daily for dryness.
- When setting up a tree at home, place it in a support device that holds the tree upright and is of adequate size to avoid tipping over. The natural tree support device should be able to contain a minimum of two (2) days water supply. The water level shall cover the tree stem at least two (2) inches and be checked daily. Candles shall never be used on or near decorative vegetation.
- Natural cut trees should be kept a distance from heat vents and any open flame (fireplaces, candles) or heat producing devices (radiators, portable heaters) at least equal to the height of the tree. The width or opening of any passageway, hallway, stairway, or doorway should not be blocked by any decorative vegetation that would impede your means of egress and exiting of any structure.

### LIGHTS or WIRING

- Indoor or outside use of wiring or lighting on any decorative vegetation must have been tested for safety by a recognized testing agency.
  - Check each set of new or old lights for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bared wires, or loose connections, and discard damaged sets.
  - Never use electrical wiring or lighting on a metal artificial tree. The tree can become electrically charged from faulty lights or wiring and a person touching any part of the tree could be electrocuted.
  - Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, house walls, or other firm supports to protect the lights from wind damage. Use only insulated staples or hooks to hold strings in place, not nails or tacks.
  - Unplug or turn off lights when you go to bed or leave the house thus eliminating the potential of starting a fire.
  - Extension cords should not be extended through walls, ceilings or floors, under doors or floor coverings. Such cords should not be subject to environmental damage or physical impact.
  - Only grounded fused extension cords or fused plug strips should be used to attach decorative devices. They should never be daisy chained or plugged into each other but used individually direct from a grounded outlet.
- Exterior decorative wiring and lighting shall be listed for outdoor use and plugged into ground fault receptacles.

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