

**NEWS RELEASE**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Contact:**  
Diana L. Klink  
757.514.4104  
757.775.7144

## **DON'T LET THE SAFETY GRINCH STEAL YOUR HOLIDAY JOY**

SUFFOLK, Virginia (December 14, 2009) What's a holiday party or even the traditional Christmas morning scene itself without a beautifully decorated tree? If your household, as those of more than 33 million other American homes, includes a natural tree in its festivities, take to heart the sales person's suggestion—"Keep the tree watered." Christmas trees account for 250 fires annually, resulting in 14 deaths, 26 injuries and more than \$13.8 million in property damage. Typically shorts in electrical lights or open flames from candles, lighters or matches start tree fires. Well-watered trees are not a problem. Dry and neglected trees can be.

Another symbol of the holidays – candles – are blamed for an estimated 14,800 home structure fires, resulting in an estimated 160 civilian deaths, 1,340 civilian injuries and an estimated direct property loss of \$471 million.

Indeed, the winter holidays are a time for celebration, and that means more cooking, home decorating, entertaining, and an increased risk of fire. Don't let a tragic accident spoil your celebrations. Consider these additional important safety tips:

- Be careful with holiday decorations. Choose decorations that are flame resistant or flame retardant.

- Do not put the tree within three feet of a fireplace, space heater, radiator, or heat vent.
- Keep lit candles away from decorations and other things that can burn.
- Use lights that have the label of an independent testing laboratory. Some lights are only for indoor or outdoor use, but not both.
- Use clips, not nails, to hang lights so the cords do not get damaged.
- Keep decorations away from windows and doors.
- Never leave a lighted Christmas tree or other decorative lighting display unattended.
- Inspect lights for exposed or frayed wires, loose connections, and broken sockets. Do not overload extension cords or outlets and do not run an electrical cord under a rug.
- Decorate with children in mind. Do not put ornaments that have small parts or metal hooks, or look like food or candy, on the lower branches where small children can reach them. Trim protruding branches at or below a child's eye level, and keep lights out of reach.
- Do not burn Christmas tree branches, treated wood, or wrapping paper in a home fireplace.

Citizens can call the Suffolk Fire Marshal's Office at 514-7540 with questions or if they need more information.

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