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AVOID A COSTLY CHRISTMAS
North Metro Fire Rescue Asks Citizens to Exercise Tree Safety

Northglenn/Broomfield, CO—When December hits, the holidays go into full swing with decorations, holiday shopping, and for some the traditional Christmas tree. While the frequency of Christmas tree fires is relatively low, when these fires do occur, they have some of the highest loss rates for the month of December.

Why are these fires so expensive and injurious? There are a number of explanations tied into the statistics:

- The location of trees tends to be in common areas (i.e. family rooms) that are typically in the heart of the residence. Fires that start here can easily spread to other areas of the home. As the fire spreads, the dollar loss increases.
- The Christmas tree provides an excellent and efficient fuel source. Dry fir trees provide both a large surface area for an open flame and resin to fuel quick-burning fires, which quickly spread outside of the room of origin.

“Unfortunately, when a Christmas tree fire does occur, it is nearly impossible to contain the fire without professional fire suppression assistance,” said Wendy Forbes,

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Public Information Officer at North Metro Fire Rescue. “Since most homes do not contain sprinkler systems, the best course of action is for families are to evacuate and call 9-1-1 immediately from a cell phone or neighbor’s residence. Things can be replaced, people can’t.”

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) offers the following tips to help reduce the likelihood of a Christmas tree fire:

Picking the tree

- If you have an artificial tree, be sure it is labeled, certified, or identified by the manufacturer as fire retardant.
- Choose a tree with fresh, green needles that do not fall off when touched.

Decorating the tree

- Before placing the tree in the stand, cut 1–2” from the base of the trunk.
- Make sure the tree is at least three feet away from any heat source, like fireplaces, radiators, candles, heat vents or lights.
- Make sure the tree is not blocking an exit.
- Add water to the tree stand. Be sure to add water daily.
- Use lights that have the label of an independent testing laboratory. Some lights are only for indoor or outdoor use, but not both.
- Replace any string of lights with worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections. Connect no more than three strands of mini string sets and a maximum of 50 bulbs for screw-in bulbs.
- Never use lit candles to decorate the tree.
- Always turn off Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.

When it comes to safety, your fire risk doesn’t reduce until you remove your tree. Get rid of the tree when it begins dropping needles. Dried-out trees are a fire danger and should not be left in the home or garage, or placed outside against the home. Check with your local community to find a recycling program.

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About North Metro Fire Rescue District

North Metro Fire Rescue is dedicated to your quality care. North Metro Fire Rescue provides fire protection, emergency medical services, hazardous materials response and rescue services to our community. Formed in 1946, the district now covers 63 square miles with a population of approximately 103,000 people including the City and County of Broomfield, the City of Northglenn and unincorporated areas of Boulder, Adams and Jefferson Counties.