



Marion County Board of County Commissioners Marion County Fire Rescue

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MAKING A FRESH TREE SELECTION ADDS TO HOLIDAY PERFECTION

Immediate Release

MARION COUNTY, Fla. (Dec. 4, 2009) – The smell of fresh tree needles and the traditional trip to pick out the perfect evergreen are only a few of the festive memories people have when choosing their Christmas tree, but there are dangers people need to be aware of when bringing this holiday icon home.

Christmas tree safety shouldn't start when the tree begins to brown or its needles begin to fall off, but instead from the moment you step foot on the tree lot. A fresh tree should have sticky sap at its trunk, needles that bend and a consistent green coloring.

Unfortunately, even if your tree is fresh and perfect, it is still flammable. So, keep your tree watered so it doesn't become overly dry. Don't use open flames or candles on or near the tree, and don't place it near fireplaces, space heaters or other heating sources. Remember also to not overload extension cords or use old light sets that are in poor condition. Even a fresh tree can ignite from an electrical short.

If the unexpected happens, you and your family should get out of the house immediately and call 911 from a neighbor's house.

While no home or Christmas tree is fireproof, Marion County Fire Rescue firefighters recommend following these safety precautions to keep this holiday season as safe and happy as possible:

- Purchase a fresh tree from a reputable dealer and look for red flags.
- Cut one to two inches off of your tree trunk to help it absorb water more effectively. Many dealers will offer this service to you for free.
- Check each strand of lights, new and old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires and loose connections. Discard damaged strands. Lights are inexpensive to replace.
- Use lights for their intended purpose. In other words, use outdoor lights outdoors and indoor lights indoors.
- Turn off all lights and other holiday decorations when you go to sleep or leave the house.

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