**Is Your Christmas Tree a Fire Danger?**

**Watch the Tremendous Speed of a Typical Home Fire**[**Here**](http://nhafc.memberclicks.net/message2/link/94f8b026-501f-4be6-8a9d-8a239d6df182/1)

*A dry Christmas tree and decorations can catch fire that spreads quickly.  Residential sprinklers and smoke alarms could be key to surviving a fire.*

**CONCORD** – The NH State Fire Marshal’s Office has some important tips for maintaining a safe home this holiday season,

especially if you have a Christmas tree. Many homes will have festive Christmas trees and Fire Marshal Paul J. Parisi wants to remind residents

that, “while they are meant to promote joy and a festive spirit, they can also be a fast burning fuel source in deadly home fires. We strongly

encourage folks to give their family the gift of safety and buy, install and test smoke alarms at the same time they are out shopping for others

or replacing their holiday lights and decorations.” NH has over [200 Christmas Tree growers](http://nhafc.memberclicks.net/message2/link/94f8b026-501f-4be6-8a9d-8a239d6df182/2) and over half a million [households](http://nhafc.memberclicks.net/message2/link/94f8b026-501f-4be6-8a9d-8a239d6df182/2) statewide. Parisi says,

“A small fire that spreads to a Christmas Tree can grow large very quickly. More than 80 percent of all fire deaths occur in the home. In New Hampshire,

we have had 11 accidental residential fire deaths in 2020. None of those homes had working smoke alarms. With a side-by-side live burn comparison,

we can show both the danger of fire and the benefits of having smoke alarms and residential fire sprinkler systems. It is critical for people to understand

how important prevention, detection, and escape are.”

Many people do understand how vital it is to have working smoke alarms to warn of a fire. “Typically there can be less than 3 minutes to get out of

a burning home. Smoke alarms serve as an early warning system to help people make the most of that time.” However, residential fire sprinklers are

not as well understood. Following an emergency call, it takes several minutes for a fire department to arrive at the fire scene. By then, a fire in

an unsprinklered residence will have spread, and begun to threaten the lives of residents. In a sprinklered home, the fire is suppressed very quickly,

limiting heat and smoke damage that can be the difference between being displaced from your home or being able to get back in quickly.

The NH Fire Marshal’s Office received support from the [National Fire Sprinkler Association](http://nhafc.memberclicks.net/message2/link/94f8b026-501f-4be6-8a9d-8a239d6df182/3) to bring this important demonstration to the state. Two compartments

were built to simulate the living room and contents in a typical home. Each room contains common furnishings, window treatments and a working smoke alarm.

Only one of the rooms contains a fire sprinkler.

**Christmas Tree Safety Tips**

* •       While artificial trees don’t require watering, many have not been tested by an independent lab, such as Underwriters Laboratory (UL). Check the tree’s tag

to make sure it is fire resistant.

* •       If you get a live tree, make sure it’s fresh. Needles should be green and springy to the touch.
* •       Cut 1-2 inches off the bottom of the trunk before placing the tree in the stand. A fresh cut allows the tree to absorb the water. Place the tree in water right away.
* •       Fill the tree stand with water every day.
* •       Make sure the tree is at least 3 feet away from any heat source, like floor vents, fireplaces, radiators, candles and lamps.
* •       Make sure your tree is not blocking an exit.
* •       Always turn off the tree lights or unplug them before going to bed or leaving your home.
* •       Replace lights that have worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections.
* •       Follow manufacturer’s instructions for the number of light strands you can safely connect. Make sure you are using the right lights for indoors or outdoors.

**Fire Sprinkler System Facts**:

* •       Fire sprinklers are supplied by household water and, like ordinary plumbing, sprinkler system piping is hidden behind walls and ceilings.
* •       Sprinklers are positioned along the piping and can be seen in ceilings or up high along certain walls.
* •       Sprinklers are activated only by the high temperature of a fire – typically between 135°-165°F.
* •       Burnt toast or other smoke cannot set off a sprinkler; a smoke alarm can’t set off a sprinkler either.
* •       Sprinklers emit between 10-25 gallons of water per minute. That’s about 10-15 times less water flow than fire department hoses, and with far less pressure.
* •       A sprinkler controls or extinguishes a fire by operating while a fire is still small, therefore slowing the spread of poisonous smoke and deadly heat.
* •       The sprinkler confines the fire damage so that surrounding rooms are protected, saving valuables.

**Fire Facts**

* •       **Fire is Fast!** In less than 30 seconds, a small flame can turn into a major fire. It only takes minutes for thick black smoke to fill a house or for it to be engulfed in flames.
* •       **Fire is Hot!** Heat is more threatening than flames. Room temperatures in a fire can be 100 degrees at floor level and rise to 600 degrees at eye level.  
  Inhaling this super-hot air will scorch your lungs and melt clothes to your skin.
* •       **Fire is Dark**! Fire starts bright, but quickly produces black smoke and complete darkness.
* •       **Fire is Deadly!** Smoke and toxic gases kill more people than flames do. Fire produces poisonous gases that make you disoriented and drowsy. Asphyxiation is the leading cause of fire deaths, exceeding burns by a 3-to-1 ratio.

**Fire sprinklers and smoke alarms buy time.**

**Time buys life. Today’s fires are fast.**