



December 2018

To: Local Fire Marshals, Deputies, and Inspectors

From: Office of the State Fire Marshal

Holiday Information Bulletin

It is that time of year when we offer the following recommended safety precautions and emphasize the Code requirements regarding the use of Christmas trees and decorations for this holiday season. We encourage your dissemination of this information by whatever means available to you.



2018 Connecticut State Fire Prevention Code Requirements

The 2018 Connecticut State Fire Prevention Code [CSFPC] (NFPA 1) addresses, “Maintenance and Operational Features” which includes Section 10.13 dealing with Combustible Vegetation which includes artificial and natural Christmas trees. Table 10.3.1.1 provides limitations by occupancy for natural Christmas trees, either with a cut trunk or a balled root system. Artificial trees and vegetation must be flame retardant or flame resistive.

Table 10.13.1.1 Provisions for Christmas Trees by Occupancy

| Occupancy | No Trees Permitted | Cut Trees Permitted with Automatic Sprinkler Systems | Cut Trees Permitted without Automatic Sprinkler Systems | Balled Tree Permitted |
|----------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Ambulatory Healthcare | | | | X |
| Apartment Buildings | | Within Unit | Within Unit | X |
| Assembly | | | | X |
| Board and Care | | | | X |
| Business | | X | | X |
| Daycare | | X | | X |
| Detention and Correctional | X | | | |
| Dormitories | | | | X |
| Educational | | | | X |
| Healthcare | | | | X |
| Hotels | | | | X |
| Industrial | | X | X | X |
| Lodging and Rooming | | X | | X |
| Mercantile | | X | | X |
| Storage | | X | X | X |

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Section 10.13.9 contains provisions for natural trees. This section gives criteria on the preparation and maintenance of natural cut trees in occupancies where permitted by Table 10.13.1.1.

Sections 10.13.5, 10.13.6, and 10.13.7 address the illumination of the trees. These sections require only listed electrical lights and wiring and prohibit the use of open flames such as candles, lanterns or other devices from illuminating the trees.

Also, the CSFPC Section 10.13.2 indicates that limited quantities of combustible vegetation shall be permitted where the AHJ determines that adequate safeguards are provided based on the quantity and nature of the combustible vegetation.

Christmas trees, decorations, and trimmings shall be located in such a manner so as to not physically obstruct means of egress. Nor shall they interfere with the use of any egress component as required by CSFPC Section 14.4, "Means of Egress Reliability". Remember, by the scope of the CSFPC, the provisions for code enforcement dealing with these Christmas issues are not applicable to one or two family dwellings pursuant to CT General Statutes §29-292.

Please note that CSFPC sections 20.4.2.5.6 and 20.6.2.5.4 prohibit combustible decorations in any healthcare or ambulatory healthcare occupancies, unless flame-retardant; therefore, cut natural trees, wreaths, or decorations are not permitted in these occupancies. CSFPC section 20.7.2.4.4 maintains the same prohibition for detention and correctional occupancies.

With respect to artificial vegetation or artificial trees, CSFPC Section 10.13.3.1 indicates that these trees be labeled or otherwise identified or certified by the manufacturer as being flame retardant or flame resistive.

CSFPC Section 10.13.9.4 Provisions for Natural Cut Trees also states that, "the tree shall be removed from the building immediately upon evidence of dryness".

Lastly, with more and more people utilizing low voltage lighting during the holiday season to enhance the landscape beauty, a reminder, the 2017 National Electric Code as adopted by the CSFPC addresses these temporary situations in articles, 590.3(B) and 411.

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For interesting Christmas tree videos see the NIST website.

<https://www.nist.gov/video/christmas-tree-fire-watered-tree-vs-dry-tree>

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HOLIDAY DECORATIONS – SAFETY RECOMMENDATION

1. Before natural trees are set up, the trunk should be sawed off above the original cut, set in a stand and tap water added. This final fresh cut opens up the sap channels in the tree so that it can take up water. Keep your tree stand water level above the cut in the trunk to prevent the tree from forming a sap seal. A sap sealed tree will not draw water which is needed for it to remain fresh.
2. All trees should be held upright in sturdy stands having a base that is sufficiently broad enough to effectively support the tree. Guy wires may be needed to steady oversized trees.
3. Natural trees having root balls should be moistened daily and cut natural trees should be placed in containers of water sufficient to provide at least a 1 day supply. A container holding at least 1 quart per inch in stem diameter is recommended.
4. Natural trees should remain indoors only for as long a period of time as they are fresh. Cut trees are thirsty! Depending on tree size, they may use from 2 pints to 1 ½ gallons or more per day – so make sure to check the water level daily and supply fresh water as needed. Remove any tree that shows evidence of drying or severe shedding.
5. All trees and decorations should be located a safe distance from sources of heat such as heaters, fireplaces, stoves, television sets, candles, and the like.
NEVER DECORATE YOUR TREE WITH CANDLES!!!
6. Overloaded electrical outlets and faulty wires are a common cause of holiday-related accidents. Worn-out electrical cords and plugs should be replaced. Avoid too many plugs in one outlet. Use multi-outlet power strips when running many applications or decorative light screens.
7. All sources of electrical lighting, both direct and indirect, should be in good condition and consist of equipment that has been tested and labeled or listed for the specific purpose by a recognized testing laboratory. All lighting should be turned off or better yet, disconnected, when the area is unattended. This is especially important in residential occupancies when the occupants are asleep.

We have attached a copy of the above general safety recommendations. It can be duplicated for distribution if you so choose. With these suggestions brought to the attention of the citizens of Connecticut, a safe and joyous holiday season can be achieved.

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