



NEWS RELEASE

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Christmas Tree Safety Tips

The brightly decorated branches, green boughs protecting the carefully stashed presents below, that unmistakable smell: Christmas trees are a huge part of our holiday traditions but it is important to take a few precautionary steps to ensure tree trimming is safe and fun for everyone.

“The holidays are a very busy time of year and it is easy to get caught up in all the fun and festive things going on,” said Krista Barton, Public Life Safety Educator with the Township of Langley Fire Department. “But some of these activities come with potential hazards. By taking a few moments to think and plan ahead, you can reduce the chances of your home and loved ones coming to harm.”

When it comes to decorating the Christmas tree, Barton said, safety starts before you even bring it home. Begin by choosing a tree with fresh, green needles that do not fall off when touched. They are more fire-resistant than those with dry, brittle needles.

Before placing the tree in the stand, cut two inches from the base of the trunk to allow it to absorb water. Be sure to add water to the stand and check the level frequently. Trees, particularly if they are pre-cut, can drink large amounts of water, taking in up to one litre per day for each inch of stem diameter.

Keep the tree at least three feet away from any heat source, such as fireplaces or candles, and be sure it does not block any exits.

When decorating the tree, use lights featuring the label of an independent testing laboratory such as CSA or ULC, Barton said, noting that some lights are for indoor or outdoor use only. Replace any strings of lights with worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections. Remember to read and follow all safety precautions listed by the manufacturer when using Christmas lights or other electrical appliances for decorating.

Never use lit candles to decorate the tree and always turn off Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.

After the holiday season is over or when the Christmas tree is dry, reduce the hazard by removing the tree from your home. Trees can be recycled at chipping events offered by local fund raising organizations. Look for a listing of tree chipping events on the Township’s website and in the Township Page in local newspapers.

Residents who receive municipal waste collection services can also leave Christmas trees out for pickup beside their Green Carts, as they would with regular branch bundles. Christmas tree branches must be no more than 7.62 cm (three inches) in diameter and tied with string or twine for a maximum bundle size of .5m wide (20 inches) x 1 metre (39 inches) long. Christmas trees may need to be cut in half. For more information, visit tol.ca/greencart.

“Dried out Christmas trees are a fire hazard and they should never be left in the home or garage or placed against the side of the house,” Barton said. “Be sure to dispose of them safely, in an environmentally friendly way.”

For more information, call the Township of Langley Fire Department at 604.532.7500.