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Holiday Tree Safety Tips

Kent, Wash. - November 30, 2015- Buying a precut or U-cut tree for the holidays? Over 30 million families in this country will this year. For some, there is just something about the smell and appearance of a real tree.

Here are some tips for when you buy and once you are home.

Selecting a tree:

- Be picky and shop around. Ask the staff how long ago the trees on the lot were cut. Try to find a tree that was cut no more than three to four days prior. Why? Trees that were cut down prior to that will be drier, drop needles faster, and be more of a fire hazard.
- Shake the tree before buying it. Why? A tree that drops a lot of needles is most likely dry and may not last as long once you have it home. Also, look for insects that fall from the tree when it is shaken.
- Recut the bottom of the trunk when you buy it - or better yet, have the attendant do it for you. Why? A fresh cut makes it easier for the tree to absorb water and stay green, reducing its fire risk.
- Shop at a tree lot that will bale your tree. Why? A tree on your vehicle that has not been baled creates more wind resistance that can damage the tree and increases the chance of it flying off, creating a road hazard.

Once home:

- Set your tree up with plenty of space around it. Why? Fireplaces, candles, and other heat sources can increase the fire danger by either drying out the tree or by potentially igniting it.
- Use a sturdy stand, even if it costs a little more. Why? A stable tree is less likely to fall if pets or kids get too close. In addition, if it is near a fireplace or other heat source, the fall could cause a fire.
- Keep the tree well-watered. Why? A dry tree is more likely to catch fire than a well-watered one. Also, a dry tree may not last as long.
- If the water level drops below the bottom of the trunk for more than a few hours, you may have to recut the trunk. Why? Exposed trunks can secrete sap which may block its ability to absorb water. Check the water level each day to ensure there is sufficient water. Keep in mind pets might drink out of the bowl, reducing the level even faster.
- Check your decorative lights before using them. Why? Many lights are designed specifically for indoor or outdoor use. Incorrect usage can increase the fire danger.
- Never use lit candles on a tree. Why? I think you know.

After the holidays are over:

- Dispose of your tree properly. Many scout troops will remove the tree for a small fee. Check with your disposal company, many will take trees as well.
- Never leave trees near your home where it can create a fire hazard.
- If appropriate for your area, a green solution is to use the tree in a natural way by adding it to a stream bed, as a home for small animals, or to decompose naturally in a wooded area.

Fire Fact: Nearly 40 percent of all indoor tree fires happen in January.

The Kent Regional Fire Authority hopes that everyone has a safe and happy holiday season.

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