



Office of
Commissioner of Insurance
NEWS RELEASE

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HUDGENS OFFERS FIRE SAFETY TIPS FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

Atlanta - Insurance and Safety Fire Commissioner Ralph Hudgens urge Georgians to keep safety in mind when decorating their homes for the holidays.

"Decorations such as lights and candles can make the holiday season more enjoyable, but they can also become fire hazards if not used with caution," Commissioner Hudgens said. "Celebrations can quickly turn into tragedies if you aren't careful."

According to the National Fire Protection Agency, U.S. fire department responds on average more than 200 home fires started by Christmas trees per year. These fire cause an average of 6 deaths and 16 injuries annually. The leading causes of Christmas tree fires in the U.S. are electrical distribution or lighting equipment.

Commissioner Hudgens offers the following tips for ensuring a safe holiday:

Christmas trees:

- Check the tree for freshness. A good test: Hold a branch about six inches from the tip and pull your hand toward the tip, allowing the branch to slip through your fingers. If the Christmas tree is fresh, very few green needles will come off. Also: Lift the tree off the ground and tap the stump on the ground. Again, very few needles should fall off.
- Place the tree in a stand designed not to tip over, and keep plenty of water in the stand.
- Do not place the tree near a fireplace, television or other heat sources.

Holiday lights:

- Buy lights labeled by a testing laboratory and always check for frayed or damaged cords.
- For outside decorations, use only outdoor lights. Never use indoor lights outside.
- Always unplug all decorative lights before leaving home or going to bed. Don't overload electrical outlets.

Fireplace safety:

- Do not light fires while stockings are hanging on the fireplace.
- Never burn wrapping paper in the fireplace; it can flare up and ignite creosote deposits in the flue.

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