

## **A Season for Sharing in Fire Safety**

Each year fires occurring during the holiday season claim the lives of over 400 people, injure 1,650 more, and cause over \$990 million in damage. San Juan County Public Safety and Education suggests the following simple life-saving steps to ensure a safe and happy holiday.

### **Christmas Tree Safety**

- ∞ Needles on fresh trees should be green and should not break if the tree has been freshly cut. The trunk should be sticky to the touch. Old trees can be identified by bouncing the tree trunk on the ground. If many needles fall off, the tree has probably dried out, and is a fire hazard. A burning tree can rapidly fill a room with fire and deadly gases.
- ∞ Do not place your tree close to a heat source, including a fireplace or heat vent. The heat will dry out the tree, causing it to be more easily ignited by heat, flame or sparks. Do not leave your live tree up longer than two weeks. Keep the tree stand filled with water.
- ∞ Never put tree branches or needles in a fireplace or woodburning stove. When the tree becomes dry, discard it promptly. The best way to dispose of your tree is by taking it to a recycling center or having it hauled away by a community pick-up service.

### **Holiday Light Safety**

- ∞ Inspect holiday lights each year for frayed wires, bare spots, gaps in the insulation, broken or cracked sockets, and excessive kinking or wear. Use only lighting listed by an approved testing laboratory.
- ∞ Do not link more than three light strands, unless the directions indicate it is safe. Connect strings of lights to an extension cord before plugging the cord into the outlet. Make sure to periodically check the wires - they should not be warm to the touch.
- ∞ Do not leave holiday lights on unattended.

### **Holiday Decoration Safety**

- ∞ All decorations should be nonflammable or flame-retardant and placed away from heat vents.

**Never Put Wrapping Paper in a Fireplace** - It can throw off dangerous sparks and produce a chemical buildup in the home that could cause an explosion.

**Artificial Christmas Tree Safety** - If you are using a metallic or artificial tree, make sure it is flame retardant.

**Candle Care** - Avoid using lit candles. If you do use them, make sure they are in stable holders and place them where they cannot be easily knocked down. Never leave the house with candles burning. Never put lit candles on a tree

Finally, as in every season, have working smoke alarms installed on every level of your home, test them monthly and keep them clean and equipped with fresh batteries at all times. Know when and how to call for help. And remember to practice your home escape plan.