



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF CONSTRUCTION SERVICES
OFFICE OF STATE FIRE MARSHAL

December, 2012

To: Local Fire Marshals, Deputies and Inspectors

From: Robert Ross, *State Fire Marshal*

HOLIDAY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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



2005 Connecticut State Fire Safety Code with amendments dated August 1, 2009 and October 2, 2012

The 2010 State Fire Prevention Code

The passage of the October 2, 2012 amendment to the Connecticut State Fire Safety Code repealed Part V – Maintenance and Operational Issues - portion of that code, this repeal put the operational and maintenance issues under the purview of the State Fire Prevention Code. The Connecticut State Fire Prevention Code [CSFPC], addresses “*General Fire Safety*” in Chapter 10 which includes Section 10.15 dealing with Combustible Vegetation which includes artificial and natural Christmas trees. Table 10.15.1 provides limitations by occupancy for natural Christmas trees, either with a cut tree trunk or a balled root system. Artificial trees and vegetation must be flame retardant or flame resistive.

Table 10.15.1 Provisions for Christmas Trees by Occupancy

Occupancy	No Trees Permitted	Cut Tree Permitted With Automatic Sprinkler System	Cut Tree Permitted Without Automatic Sprinkler System	Balled Tree Permitted
Ambulatory health care				X
Apartment buildings		Within Unit	Within Unit	X
Assembly				X
Board and care				X
Business		X		X
Day-care		X		X
Detention and correctional	X			
Dormitories				X
Educational				X
Health care				X
Hotels				X
Industrial		X	X	X
Lodging and rooming		X		X
Mercantile		X		X
Storage		X	X	X

Section 10.15.9 contains provisions for natural cut trees, this section gives criteria on the preparation and maintenance of natural cut trees in occupancies where permitted by Table 10.15.1.

Sections 10.15.5, 10.15.6, and 10.15.7 address the illumination of the trees; these sections require only listed electrical lights and wiring, the prohibition of open flames such as candles, lanterns, or other devices from illuminating the trees.

Also Section 10.15.2 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 Section 14.4.1 "*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 Statute §29-292.

Further, Chapter 20 states, "*Furnishings or decorations of an explosive or highly flammable character shall not be used,*" and the associated appendix note reads "*Christmas trees not effectively flame-retardant treated, ordinary crepe paper decorations and pyroxylin plastic decorations may be classified as highly flammable.*"

It is not the intent of this section to classify all Christmas trees and decorations such as wreaths and trimmings as inherently being of a highly flammable character and prohibit their use within occupancies regulated by the CSFPC.

- * Metal trees and artificial trees that are flame retardant would not fall into this classification. Check the manufacturer's data card for details if you are in doubt.
- * Natural trees having an adequately moistened root ball generally do not pose a significant hazard and are permitted in most occupancies regulated by the CSFPC.
- * Cut natural trees are more likely to fall into this classification due to their tendency to dry out. Initially, a cut tree, if fresh, may not pose a hazard; however, as it dries the hazard becomes increasingly more significant.

Please note that Sections 20.4.2.5.7 and 20.6.2.5.5 prohibit combustible decorations in any health care or ambulatory health-care occupancy unless flame-retardant; therefore, cut natural trees, wreaths, or decorations are not permitted in these occupancies. Section 20.7.2.4.5 maintains the same prohibition for detention and correctional occupancies.

With respect to artificial vegetation or artificial trees Section 10.15.3.1 indicated that these decorations be labeled or otherwise identified or certified by the manufacturer as being flame retardant or flame resistive.

Section 10.15.9.4 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 outdoor low voltage lighting during the holiday season to enhance the landscape beauty, a reminder the 2005 National Electrical Code as adopted by the CSFSC addresses these temporary situation in articles 590.3(B) and 411.

For interesting Christmas tree videos see the NIST Website

http://www.fire.nist.gov/tree_fire.htm

HOLIDAY DECORATIONS - SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

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 initial 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 trunk 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 one 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 two pints to one and one half 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 electric 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.

Attachment
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