

A Message From:

Lorraine A. Cortés-Vázquez
Secretary of State

The Best Holiday is a safe one...

Holidays are times that all New Yorkers enjoy spending with family and friends. During this time, many of us decorate our homes and places of work to further cherish the holiday feeling with trees, signs, lights, and candles.

Unfortunately, the improper use or placement of holiday decorations could place you and those around you at higher risk for an accident to happen.

The information in this brochure is to help you in decorating for a "safe holiday." Also included are prohibitions of interior decorations found in the Fire Code of New York State.

On behalf of all of the staff at the Department of State, have an enjoyable and safe holiday season.

For further assistance:

On the Fire Code of NYS
Division of Code Enforcement and
Administration
(518) 474-4073
codes@dos.state.ny.us

On Fire Safety Practices
Office of Fire Prevention and
Control
(518) 474-6746
fire@dos.state.ny.us

41 State Street
Albany, New York 12231
(518) 474-0050

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Holiday Safety



New York State
Department of State

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General SAFETY Tips

Decorating, both indoor and outdoor, can be exciting. Here are some tips that can make your holiday event-free:

- Ensure that your family and people that are staying for the holidays know your home fire escape plan.
- Have your chimney or vent for your fireplace or wood-stove cleaned and inspected before use for the season.
- Check all of your smoke alarms.
- Whenever possible, use flame-retardant or flame-resistant decorating materials. Never use natural vegetation indoors that is not set in water or soils.
- Watch for overloading of electrical circuits. Use listed power distribution blocks or strips with automatic circuit protection when overloaded or overheated.

Candles

Whether for tradition or decoration, candles need special care when used.

- Do not place candles on or near any decorative vegetation or trees.
- Always use candles in holders that are sturdy and adequately collect dripping wax.

Trees

For some people, the placement of a tree in their home signifies the beginning of the holiday season. Before doing this, consider the following points:

- The location of the tree should not be in the way of doors, windows, or in paths used for exiting.
- Trees should be a distance, at least equal to the height of the tree, away from open flames and sources of ignition. This includes heaters, fireplaces, and woodstoves.
- Check to ensure that any decorative lighting that is used is ‘listed,’ such as the “UL” label, and that the lighting is for ‘indoor’ use. Do not place lights on metal trees.

Natural Cut Trees

To enjoy the holidays even more, some people like to bring a natural cut tree into their homes or into a public place or business. Before placing a natural cut tree in a building, make sure that the *Fire Code of New York State* permits it.

Natural cut trees are permitted in all one- and two-family homes, townhouses, and the dwelling units of apartments and condominiums. Also, business, factory,

and storage type buildings can display a natural cut tree.

Buildings such as theatres, schools, hotels/motels, restaurants, covered malls, assisted living homes and retail stores have restrictions on when natural cut trees can be placed inside them. The *Fire Code of New York State* Section 804 lists prohibited locations and conditions for the display of natural cut trees.

Some general guidelines for natural cut trees are:

- Choose a tree that is not dry and is not dropping needles.
- Use a stand that can adequately hold up the tree. Before placing the tree in the stand, cut at least ½ inch of the stem off to give a fresh surface for the water to be in contact with.
- Proper placement of the tree in water and on-going maintenance will make the tree safe and last throughout the holiday season. Ensure that the tree stem is covered by at least two inches of water at all times and check the level at least daily.
- If needles or leaves fall off the tree readily when shaken or if the needles break when pinched, the tree is too dry for indoor use and should be removed.
- Place trees away from heaters and the path of heat vents. Additional heat will dry the tree faster.