

Safety Fact Sheet



The Utah Safety Council cares about your safety outside of the work setting. We offer resources that keep you and your loved ones safe at home, at play and on the go.

TRIM YOUR TREE SAFELY

Each year around 230 Christmas tree fires occur resulting in over \$18 million in property damage, according to the National Fire Prevention Association. While you can't make your holiday tree completely fireproof, you can help ensure its safety by properly selecting and caring for the tree and by adding a fire-retardant preservative.

Selecting a Safer Tree

Christmas trees are often cut several weeks before they appear in the lots for sale, so they may already have begun to dry out, making them more of a fire hazard. The trees are also often sprayed with a dye to make the needles look bright and fresh, so green color isn't a clear sign of freshness. Make a few tests to choose the best, safest tree.

- Check for green needles. While this isn't a definite positive sign, seeing brown needles is a certain sign of dryness.
- Tug the needles gently. They should resist being bent toward the branch, and they should not pull out easily.
- Bounce the cut end of the trunk on the ground. Only a few needles should fall out.
- Find a small branch that doesn't show too much and try to snap it. It should not break easily.
- Touch the trunk. It should feel slightly sticky from the sap.
- Pull back a small area of bark. The wood underneath should be pale green or white.



Caring for the Tree

Your tree will continue to dry out after you take it home unless you take proper precautions to keep it hydrated. First, immediately cut off the bottom 1 inch of the trunk and put the tree in a bucket of preservative or water. Keep the trunk in contact with either liquid for the entire time the tree is in your home. Don't set up the tree near hot air vents, and do not smoke or place burning candles close to it. Before placing them on the tree, check all of the light strands for frayed cords, including the portion of cord near the wall plug.

Preserving a Safer Tree

Again, you can't make a tree totally fireproof. No matter how you treat it, it will still burn if a fire near it is hot enough. However, you can make a preservative that makes it less likely to ignite. The preservative works because the syrup provides food for the tree in the form of sugar; the boric acid releases boron, which helps the sugar move to the branches and

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needles; and the Epson salts and iron release magnesium, which aids in the production of chlorophyll to keep the needles green and fragrant. The bleach prevents mold from growing in the water or the tree.

Things You'll Need

- 2 cups light corn syrup
- 2 ounces chlorine bleach
- 2 ounces Epsom salt
- 1 teaspoon chelated iron
- 1/2 teaspoon boric acid
- 2 gallons hot water

Tip: Epsom salt is available in the pharmacy department of the grocery store, while boric acid is on the laundry detergent aisle. Small packets of chelated iron are available at your local garden shop.

Step 1

Mix all of the ingredients thoroughly and pour them into a bucket.

Step 2

Strip the bark off the trunk of the tree to a height of 3 inches from the freshly cut end.

Step 3

Stand the tree in the mixture and let it set for at least 24 hours.

Step 4

Place the tree in a stand that has a water reservoir.

Step 5

Fill the reservoir with the preservative. Top it off every day to keep the reservoir filled. Your tree may wick up as much as 1 1/2 gallons over a two-week period.

Source: National Fire Prevention Association.