



December 2023

To: Local Fire Marshals, Deputies, and Inspectors

From: Office of the State Fire Marshal

Holiday Information Bulletin

It is that time of year when we offer the following recommended safety precautions and emphasize the Code requirements regarding the use of Natural Combustible Decorative Vegetation in buildings (Christmas trees and decorations) for this holiday season. We encourage your dissemination of this information by whatever means available to you.



2022 Connecticut State Fire Safety and Prevention Code Requirements

Both 2022 Connecticut State Fire Safety and Prevention Codes address ‘Combustible Decorative Vegetation’ aka Christmas Trees with the Codes being amended to contain the same Table as has been permitted by Connecticut for many years. Artificial trees and vegetation must be flame retardant or flame resistive.

Table for Provisions for Christmas Trees by Occupancy
12.6.9.1.1

Occupancy	No Trees Permitted	Cut Trees Permitted with Automatic Sprinkler Systems	Cut Trees Permitted without Automatic Sprinkler Systems	Balled Tree Permitted
Ambulatory Healthcare				X
Apartment Buildings		Within Unit	Within Unit	X
Assembly				X
Board and Care				X
Business		X		X
Daycare		X		X
Detention and Correctional	X			
Dormitories			X**	X
Educational				X
Healthcare				X
Hotels				X
Industrial		X	X	X

Lodging and Rooming		X		X
Mercantile		X		X
Storage		X	X	X

** Cut trees in dwelling units that are associated with supervisory personnel in dormitory occupancies are permitted subject to the approval of the AHJ.

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Section 806 in Part III along with Section 10.3.9 in Part IV of the Fire Safety Code and Section 12.6.9 of the Fire Prevention Code contains provisions for natural trees. These sections contain nearly identical criteria on the preparation and maintenance of natural cut trees in occupancies where permitted by the Table. Since the decorations are of a temporary/seasonal nature and are not normally used to support the building components, building services, or building systems the Office of State Fire Marshal recommends using the provisions in the Connecticut State Fire Prevention Code for this feature.

Sections 12.6.9.1.1 refers us to the above table to give us guidance as to whereby occupancy classification and what type (cut/balled) trees are allowed. Also, section 12.6.9.3 reminds us that the placement of the tree shall not obstruct corridors, exit ways, or other means of egress; and 12.6.9.4 reminds us that the location of the tree is such that building systems or appliances would not cause it to dry out prematurely or be ignited.

Sections 12.6.9.6.1 through 12.6.9.6.3 address the preparation of the tree and that it should be placed in a suitable stand with water and the water level be maintained above the fresh cut.

Section 12.6.9.6.4 also states that, “the tree shall be removed from the building immediately upon evidence of dryness”.

Section 12.6.9.7 addresses electrical equipment (lights and wiring) used on the trees. Additionally, the National Electrical Code (NEC / NFPA 70) in article 590.5 addresses the listing of decorative lighting and states in part ‘Decorative lighting used for holiday lighting and similar purposes, in accordance with 590.3(b) shall be listed and labeled on the product.

Section 12.6.9.8 addresses open flames reminding us that candles and open flames shall not be used on or near either natural or combustible artificial decorative vegetation.

Also, Section 12.6.9.2 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.

In alignment with the Table, please note that CSFPC sections 20.4.2.5.6 and 20.6.2.5.4 prohibit combustible decorations in any healthcare or ambulatory healthcare occupancies, unless flame-retardant; therefore,

cut natural trees, wreaths, or decorations are not permitted in these occupancies. CSFPC section 20.7.2.4.6 maintains the same prohibition for detention and correctional occupancies.

With respect to artificial vegetation or artificial trees, Section 12.6.9.5.2 indicates that these trees be labeled or otherwise identified or certified by the manufacturer as being flame retardant or flame resistive.

Remember, by the scope of the CSFSC and 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 Statutes §29-292.

Lastly, with more and more people utilizing low voltage lighting during the holiday season to enhance the landscape beauty, a reminder, the 2020 National Electric Code as adopted by the CSFPC addresses these temporary situations in articles, 590.3(B) and 411.

For interesting Christmas tree videos see the NIST website.

<https://www.nist.gov/video/christmas-tree-fire-watered-tree-vs-dry-tree>

NFPA Information

Below are links to the National Fire Protection Association public education resources for Holiday Fire Safety.

https://content.nfpa.org/-/media/project/storefront/catalog/files/safety-tip-sheets/winter_holiday_safety.pdf?rev=0c14f1ac73254c9d8f5e74083c3715b6

<https://content.nfpa.org/-/media/project/storefront/catalog/files/safety-tip-sheets/christmastreesafetytips.pdf?rev=a02fb8c336644036818301ff412f963c>

<https://content.nfpa.org/-/media/project/storefront/catalog/files/home-fire-safety/project-holiday/nfpaprojectholidaytreetags.pdf?rev=a5df35bd84d44ebf9da7130930321371>

Here is a Video from the NFPA on holiday fire Safety.

<https://youtu.be/-ugeFgJlpi4?si=z1z8eRoH9h6aHxTk>

With the rise in popularity of e-bikes, attached are two safety bulletins also from NFPA

[NFPA Fact Sheet | E-bike and e-scooter safety](#)

<https://content.nfpa.org/-/media/project/storefront/catalog/files/safety-tip-sheets/lithiumionbatterysafety.pdf?rev=3a2e51dd69234fe18a1ed38cccd141b>

HOLIDAY DECORATIONS – SAFETY RECOMMENDATION

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 final 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 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 1-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 as they are fresh. Cut trees are thirsty! Depending on tree size, they may use from 2 pints to 1 ½ 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 electrical 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.

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