



INSURANCE AND SAFETY FIRE COMMISSIONER

- State of Georgia -

NEWS RELEASE

John F. King

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COMMISSIONER KING URGES CAUTION WITH HOLIDAY DECORATIONS

ATLANTA – Insurance and Safety Fire Commissioner John F. King is urging Georgians to use caution while decorating their homes this holiday season.

“Some people tend to go above and beyond when it comes to decorating their homes for the holidays,” King said. “While decorating the house and Christmas tree can be a fun family activity, the more lights or decorations you have can also lead to a greater risk of a fire starting.”

According to the National Fire Protection Association, from 2013-2017, U.S. fire departments responded to an average 160 home fires started by Christmas trees per year. These fires caused an average of 3 deaths, 15 injuries, and \$10 million in direct property damage annually. During that same time, U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated average of 780 home structure fires per year that began with decorations, excluding Christmas trees. These fires caused an annual average of 3 civilian fire deaths, 34 civilian fire injuries, and \$12 million in direct property damage.

Commissioner King offers the following holiday decoration and Christmas tree fire safety tips:

- Choose a tree with fresh, green needles that do not fall off when touched.
- Make sure the tree is at least three feet away from any heat source, including fireplaces, radiators, candles, heat vents, or lights.
- Use lights that have the label of a recognized testing laboratory. Some lights are only for indoor or outdoor use. Make sure to be aware of which lights you are using.
- Never use lit candles to decorate the tree.
- Make sure the tree is not blocking an exit. Be sure to water the tree daily.
- Always turn off all decorations before leaving the home or going to bed.
- Never exceed the maximum number of strings or devices that may be linked together, as indicated on decoration packaging.
- Carefully inspect all lights and decorations for cracks, damaged sockets, and loose or bare wires prior to use. When repairing the damages, unplug electric lights, devices, and decorations before installing or replacing bulbs, changing parts, or attempting other repairs.
- Secure lights, decorations, and cords to prevent wind damage. Never staple, nail through, or fasten electrical wires or extensions cords in any way that might damage the wire or insulation.

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