

Natural Cut "Christmas" Tree Safety

The following is a message from the West Point Fire Department. What's a holiday party or even the traditional Christmas morning scene itself without a beautifully decorated tree? If your household, as those of more than 33 million other American homes, includes a natural tree in its festivities, take to heart the sales person's suggestion—"Keep the tree watered." That's good advice and not just to create a fragrant indoor winter wonderland atmosphere. Christmas trees account for 200 fires annually, resulting in 6 deaths, 25 injuries and more than \$6 million in property damage. Typically shorts in electrical lights or open flames from candles, lighters or matches start tree fires. Well-watered trees are not a problem. Dry and neglected trees can be. Remember to keep that tree watered and follow the Natural Cut Tree Checklist.

Natural Cut Tree Checklist

- Natural Cut Trees are only allowed in MILITARY FAMILY HOUSING residences and RELIGIOUS Facilities. Religious facilities shall request an inspection from the Fire Prevention Division at fireprevention@usma.edu, to ensure compliance.
- Where a natural cut tree is permitted (**housing & religious facilities only**), the bottom end of the trunk shall be cut off with a straight fresh cut at least $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (13 mm) above the end prior to placing the tree in a stand to allow the tree to absorb water.
- The tree shall be placed in a suitable stand with water.
- The water level shall be maintained above the fresh cut and checked at least once daily.
- The tree shall be removed from the building immediately upon evidence of dryness.
- A method to check for dryness is to grasp a tree branch with a reasonably firm pressure and pull your hand to you, allowing the branch to slip through your grasp. If the needles fall off readily, the tree does not have adequate moisture content and should be removed.
- Lighting and wiring must be Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) approved and in good physical condition with no splices or short-circuiting in the wiring.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS !!!!