

# Office of the Fire Marshal Kern County Fire Department

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Fire Prevention

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## Fire Proofing Flame Proofing Christmas Trees

Each member of the department is responsible for preventing the loss of life and property. The most effective way to fight a fire is to prevent one from happening in the first place.

KCFD personnel are expected to see that educating the public remains a priority.

### Christmas Trees

- The most important factor is freshness, because of moisture content.
- Plastic trees should be fire-resistant and labeled as such. They will not burn easily.
- The larger the tree, the greater the hazard! Buy only the size you need.
- When purchasing from a lot, check the delivery date to select from the batch.
- Check by tapping on the ground. If excess needles shake loose, choose another.
- Pull on some needles. They should not come out easily.
- Check a small branch for brittleness.
- Bend a needle: fir needles snap when fresh; pine needles bend when fresh.
- Don't rely on green color; it may be sprayed on.

### Fire Proofing your Christmas Tree

Re-cut the end of the tree by 1 inch, and then let it stand in a bucket of fireproofing mixture (recipe below) until you're ready to bring it indoors. Fill the reservoir twice a day (morning and evening) with the remaining mixture.

Fireproof mixture for your tree:

- ~ 2 gallons of hot water
- ~2 cups of corn syrup
- ~2 ounces of liquid bleach
- ~2 pinches of Epsom salt
- ~1/2 teaspoon borax
- ~1 teaspoon of Chelated iron (found in a garden shop)

How does this fireproofing work?

The corn syrup provides sugar, which allows the tree to soak up enormous amounts of water. Without the sugar, only a small amount of water is absorbed. You can expect the tree to soak up 1 and 1/2 gallons of the recipe during the 10-14 day period your tree is up. This is approximately 800% more water than it would have absorbed growing in the forest.

The boron (in the borax) makes the water and sugar move to every needle of your tree. The Epsom salt and Chelated iron provide magnesium sulfate that facilitates the process of chlorophyll production, keeping your needles green. Bleach stops the mold from forming when water and sugar stand for a period of time.

## **Flame Proofing**

- Christmas trees over three feet tall in places of assembly must be flame-proofed.
- Must be done by a certified company using chemicals and methods approved by State Fire Marshal.
- Tree must be tagged to indicate conformation with State Fire Marshal regulations.
- If done on a lot, the firm must have a State Fire Marshal registration.
- Examine tree for adequacy of coverage, including undersides of needles. Fairly heavy coverage is required to be effective.
- Many chemicals used are water-soluble. Treated trees must be protected from weather.
- It is not necessary to pre-treat a flocked tree, unless flocking will be very light.
- Do not rely on do-it-yourself flame-proofing. Chemicals are impossible to apply correctly at home.