



Code Outreach Program – Holiday Edition

Family, Friends, and Fire Safety

The Division of Building Standards and Codes and the Office of Fire Prevention and Control (OFPC) wish you and your family a happy and safe holiday season. Holiday decorations, candles, Christmas trees, and holiday lighting can cause fires when not used properly. Useful fire safety tips and fire statistics pertaining to hazards commonly encountered this time of year, can be obtained by clicking these links:

- [Winter Holiday Safety Tips \(OFPC\)](#)
- [Natural Cut Tree Safety \(OFPC\)](#)
- [Holiday Candle Safety Tips \(OFPC\)](#)
- [Winter Holiday Safety \(NFPA\)](#)
- [Winter Holiday Fires by the Numbers \(NFPA\)](#)
- [Winter Weather Fire Safety \(FEMA\)](#)
- [Winter Safety Resources \(ICC\)](#)

Some common fire hazards encountered during the holidays while performing periodic inspections are discussed below.

Natural Cut Trees

Although Christmas tree fires are not common, when they do occur, they are very dangerous. Section 806 of the [2015 International Fire Code](#) (2015 IFC) contains provisions relating to decorative vegetation in new and existing buildings, including natural cut trees and artificial vegetation. Section 806.1.1, which prohibits natural cut trees in certain occupancies, is modified by the [2017 Uniform Code Supplement](#) by permitting natural cut trees in some places of public assembly where specific fire safety measures are met. A heat source too close to the Christmas tree causes [1 in every 4](#) winter fires. Natural cut trees shall be kept a distance equal to at least the height of the tree from heat vents, flames, and any heat-producing devices (see Section 806.4 of the 2015 IFC). Tree placement shall not block exits. Natural trees shall be checked daily for dryness per Section 806.1.3 of the 2015 IFC and removed from the building when deemed dry.

Decorations

Artificial trees and decorative vegetation must meet the flame propagation criteria of Section 806.2 of the 2015 IFC; drapery, curtains, art work, and other decorative materials shall meet the limits and test criteria of Section 807.

Candles

According to Section 806.4 of the 2015 IFC, candles and open flames shall not be used on or near natural cut trees, artificial decorative vegetation, or other flammable materials.

Extension Cords

According to Section 605.5 of the 2015 IFC, extension cords shall be plugged into approved receptacles, power taps or multi-plug adapters (not surge protectors), and not be affixed to structures, extended through walls, ceilings or floors, or under doors and floor coverings. They shall be free from splices, deterioration, and damage. Decorative lighting shall be listed, and in good condition. Read the manufacturer's instructions and do not exceed the recommended number of light strands connected in series. The capacity of an extension cord shall be greater than the demand of the portable appliance(s) or decorative lights connected to them. If the appliance or lights are grounded, the extension cord shall be grounded as well. Extension cords shall never be used for portable space heaters (see Section 605.10.3).

Means of Egress and Fire Sprinkler heads

Means of egress and exit signs shall not be blocked or concealed by trees or decorations - see Sections 806.3, 1010.1, 1031.4, and 1031.6 of the 2015 IFC. The operation of sprinkler heads shall not be impeded by decorations, nor shall any items be hung from them. The required width of aisles shall be maintained per Section 702.2 of the [2015 International Property Maintenance Code](#).

Please consider sharing this information with your community and encourage others to have a safe holiday season.

Please look for our next edition of the Code Outreach Program at the beginning of next month.

In-Service Training

How to check In-Service Training credits: <https://www.dos.ny.gov/DCEA/pdf/Check%20training%20credits.pdf>

How to View Your Training Credits in SLMS: <https://youtu.be/jgMPIQtV17c>

DBSC - A Division of Department of State
OFPC – An Office of the Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Services

If you have questions pertaining to the Code Outreach Program, email us at COP.codes@dos.ny.gov

If you have questions pertaining to the Uniform Code or Energy Code, email our technical support group at: codes@dos.ny.gov.

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