Christmas Tree Fire Safety Guidelines

Regulations are as directed by Howard County Fire & Rescue Services and the Maryland State Fire Marshal’s Office.

Live (Balled) Tree  Container grown, balled and burlapped; it has been uprooted and its roots are protected by an earthen ball. When watered they are safer since they don’t dry out as quickly.

Fresh Cut Trees  Evergreen trees that have been cut, sawn, or harvested with the intention of decorative display within a building.

NO CUT OR BALLED TREES PERMITTED IN - ASSEMBLY, BOARD and CARE, DETENTION AND CORRECTIONS, DORMORTIES, EDUCATIONAL AND HOTELS

Sprinklered Buildings  - Cut trees are allowed in Apartments, Business, Day-care, Industrial, Mercantile, Storage and One-Two Family dwellings

Non sprinklered Buildings  - Trees are permitted in Apartments, Industrial, Storage and One-Two Family dwellings

Balled trees  - Are permitted in Apartments Buildings, Business, Daycare, Health Care, Industrial, Lodging and Rooming, Mercantile, Storage and One-Two Family dwellings

1. The Fire Marshal shall: approve the tree placement (if necessary); limit the number of trees; and order the removal of any tree if it poses a hazard to life or safety.
2. The Office of the Fire Marshal *strongly encourages* artificial trees.

**Fresh cut trees must meet the following:**

- Not be more than ten (10) feet tall. *(Excluding Tree Stand)*
- The bottom end of the trunk shall be cut off with a straight fresh cut at least 2” above the end prior to placing in a stand to allow the tree to absorb water.
- The tree must be placed in a suitable stand with water. The water level must be maintained above the fresh cut and checked at least daily.
- Trees shall be removed from the building immediately upon evidence of dryness.

**Fire Safety Standards for Holiday Decorating**

- Trees must not be placed near exits; nor can they obstruct any exit.
- Decorative lights should not be used on a metal artificial tree because of the potential electrical shock hazard. Spotlights may be used for illumination. Only decorative lighting meeting approval of a recognized testing lab shall be used on any trees or decorations.
- Electrical extension cords must be used in accordance with safe electrical practices. Do not locate across corridors or aisles unless suitably protected and secured by approved protective guard.
- Open flames such as candles, lanterns, fireplaces, kerosene heaters, and gas fired heaters must not be located on or near Christmas trees or decorations of any type.