
Christmas Tree Fires

U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated annual average of 260 home1 structure fires that began with Christmas trees in 2004-2008. These fires caused an annual average of:

- 14 civilian fire deaths
- 26 civilian fire injuries
- $13.8 million in direct property damage

On average, one of every 21 reported home Christmas tree fires resulted in a death.

Electrical problems were factors in one-third of home Christmas tree structure fires.

A heat source was too close to the Christmas tree in one of every five (19%) of these fires.

Thirteen percent of home Christmas tree fires involved decorative lights.

Candles started 11% of home Christmas tree structure fires.

More than one-third (37%) of all home Christmas tree fires started in the living room, family room, or den.

One of every five (19%) home Christmas tree structure fires were intentionally set. More than half of the intentional Christmas tree fires occurred in January and may have been related to disposal.

Line-Voltage Holiday or Decorative Light Fires

Line-voltage holiday or decorative lights or were involved in an average of 150 home structure fires per year, resulting in an average of:

- 8 civilian deaths,
- 16 civilian injuries, and
- $8.9 million in direct property damage.

Forty-two percent of these fires were reported in December and 13% occurred in January.

In one-fifth (21%) of these fires, Christmas trees were the item first ignited.

Electrical problems were factors in 67% of these fires. Something that could burn was too close to the lights in 10% of the fires.

Roughly 5,800 people per year were treated at hospital emergency rooms for falls associated with holiday decorations.2

Leading Items First ignited in Holiday Light Home Structure Fires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christmas tree</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical wire or cable insulation</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decoration</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exterior wall covering or finish</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mattress or bedding</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural member or framing</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light vegetation, including grass</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclassified organic material</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1Homes are dwellings, duplexes, manufactured homes, apartments, townhouses, and rowhouses.

Source: Home Christmas Tree and Holiday Lights, Marty Ahrens, NFPA Fire Analysis and Research, Quincy, November 2010.