

Holiday Light Safety

By Chief Bill Reed

Tis' the season for Holiday lights and displays and with this come the hazards of electrical fire cause. According to the NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) on the average 170 structure fires a year can be attributed to line voltage holiday or decorative lighting. This causes approximately seven deaths, 17 injuries and \$7.9 million dollars in property damage annually. Some tips endorsed by the National Safety Council are as follows:

- Only use lights tested and rated by Underwriters Laboratories (UL labeled).

- Follow manufacturer guidelines, including use in the proper environment (indoor or outdoor)

- Check lights for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires and loose sockets. Discard and replace any damaged light sets.

- Use no more than three standard light sets per a single extension cord.

- Extension cords should be placed against walls, but do not run cords under rugs or carpets.

- Be careful when hanging lights. Use insulated holders instead of tacks, staples or nails.

- Avoid hanging lights near any potential fire hazard such as loose paper, curtains or other combustible materials.

- Turn off lights before you go to bed or leave the house. Take lights down after the holidays, these lights are meant for temporary use.

The NFPA reports that on the average 250 structure fires are attributed to Christmas trees. This causes approximately 14 deaths, 26 injuries and \$13.8 million dollars in property damage annually. The National Safety Council recommends the following Christmas tree safety tips:

- When purchasing live trees, check for fresh green needles. Be sure needles hard to pull from branches, Cut an additional 2" off the trunk and keep it watered at all times.

- When purchasing artificial tree, look for a "fire-resistant" label.

- Place your tree at least three feet form any fireplaces, radiators, or other home heating devices like space heaters, wood-burners or other commercially available electric heaters.

- Never use candles to decorate a tree.

Please practice these fire safety tips for a safe holiday celebration. From our families to yours, have a safe merry Christmas and fire-safe New Year from Chief Bill Reed and the officers and firefighters of Middlefield Fire Department. We are always honored to serve you Be sure to watch for Santa around town on Thursday, Dec.19.