

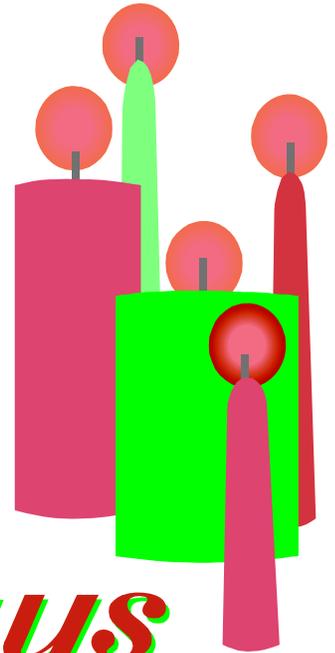
Hoke County Newsletter

Welcome to the Hoke County Newsletter. Inside you'll find information of what's going on inside Hoke County.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please email

Newsletter
@hokecounty.org

*Happy
Holidays
from Hoke County*



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AND MUCH MORE...

SHERIFF'S OFFICE RECEIVES NATIONAL ACCREDITATION

The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies recently paid a visit to the Hoke County Sheriff's Office. After a very thorough process involving paperwork, interviews, and various other undertakings, the Hoke County Sheriff's Office has earned national accreditation.

Hoke County is the fifth county in North Carolina to earn this classification.

To earn this accreditation, Hoke County had to obtain a certain level of efficiency within their office. They were found to be in compliance with 177 career standards. This achievement shows that they have been recognized at a national level as being reliable and qualified to perform their duties.

Members from the Sheriff's Office will travel to Alabama in March to receive

the official certificate of accreditation.

Now that the Sheriff's Office has received accreditation, they will have to continue to maintain certain standards. They will be visited and re-evaluated every three years.





BREAKFAST WITH SANTA

Children 6 and younger, along with their parents, are invited to join us for a delightful morning sharing breakfast with Santa and his helpers at the L. E. McLaughlin Building.

Parents will have opportunity to take pictures of their child with Santa and each

child will receive a Christmas goodie.

This event will take place December 10th starting at 9:00am until 11:00 am. Tickets must be purchased in advance.

Tickets are on sale!

Price \$1.00 per Child and \$3.00 per Adult

Building space is limited so only the first 100 children registered will be able to attend

For further questions, please call (910) 875-4035

“JUST US PLUS” LINE DANCERS

The group of dancers started out learning to line dance and found out that Lumber River Regional Senior Games held Performing Arts Competition.

The first group to compete consisted of three dancers and was named “JUST US” they won 1st place and gold medals.

The line dancers were very excited about this and decided to participate the next year adding more dancers to the group thereby changing the name to “JUST US PLUS”

The dancers have won 1st place gold medals twice at the local level and once at the state level coming in 3rd place.

This spring “Just Us Plus” won 1st place and best overall and will be competing at the state level again September 30th in Raleigh, North Carolina.

The members are as follows:

Janice Creekmore, Joanne Hendrix, Barbara Jones, Brenda Jacobs, Pat Graham, Brenda Branch, Ken Booker, Gwen Booker, Frank Baker, Joan Baker, Pam Locklear, Darlene Clark, and Edward Bradley (Instructor)



WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING AT THE HOKE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY?



In October, the "Just Us Plus" line dancers put on a show at the Hoke County Public Library. They put on many crowd-pleasing numbers for the audience to enjoy!

In November, Kelly Rossi and Nicolette Campos visited the library with two special guests: Noodle and Jackson



Noodle and Jackson are their certified TDI (Therapy Dogs International) therapy dogs. Pictured below, Noodle and Jackson enjoy listening to stories as the children read aloud.



READING WITH THE LIBRARY ELF

Santa's elves have decided that your local library is the best place to entertain children with stories of Christmas and Santa. For two days, the 20th and 22nd of December The Hoke County Public Library will host Jessica, one of Santa's goofiest and silliest elves, to tell stories and give you a chance to read to her. She will also be picking up

letters for Santa but watch out a special guest may make an appearance on the 22nd at the 2:00 to 3:00 program.

The program is for ages 0 - 8. There is one on the 20th from 2:00 to 3:00 and two on the 22nd from 10:00 to 11:00 and again 2:00 to 3:00.

If any children have any

letters they wish to give Santa they can drop it off at the Santa mailbox or hand it to the elf Jessica during program.

Hoke County Public Library
334 N. Main Street
Raeford, NC 28376

Call (910) 875-2502 for additional information

UPCOMING LIBRARY PROGRAMS

RECURRING PROGRAMS

Preschool Storytime

Every Tuesday @ 10:00 am in the Dorothy Cameron Children's Room
For children ages 3-5

Homework Central

Tuesdays & Thursdays
3:30-5:30
Free homework help for grades K-12
Call 875-2502 to preregister; seating is limited

Teen Night

3rd Fridays
4:00-6:00 pm
For ages 13-18 – activities, games, food, fun!

Basic Computer Skills Classes

Tuesdays -- 5:00-6:00 pm
Thursdays -- 10:00-11:00 am
Saturdays -- 10:00-11:00 am
SEATING IS LIMITED -- call 875-2502 to pre-register, and for class information!

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Reading With Noodle and Jackson

Saturday, December 3rd (Noodle)
2:00-4:00 pm

Saturday, December 17th (Jackson)
2:00-4:00pm

Saturday, January 14 2012
2:00-4:00pm

Families All Read (F*A*R)

A Smart Start funded family literacy program for families with children ages 0-5. **Each child (age 5 & under) gets a FREE BOOK!

Thursday, December 1
6:30-7:30 pm

Saturday, December 17
3:00-4:00 pm

Thursday, January 5, 2012
6:30-7:30 pm

Saturday, January 21, 2012
3:00-4:00 pm



HEALTH DEPARTMENT UPDATE

Annual Maternity Fair

On October 19th, 56 people attended the event. 23 Exhibitors from various human services provided helpful information and resources to Hoke County families which contributed to the success of this event.

The Guest Speaker was Dawn Lowery from Precious Endeavors, PLLC who facilitated a discussion on the important of natural childbirth for mother and baby.

Symposium On Communicable Diseases:

The East Hoke Middle School eighth grade students, teachers and the

Health Department teamed up for their Annual Communicable Disease Symposium on October 13th, in an effort to help the eighth grade science students apply their classroom knowledge to real world applications. Approximately 300 students took part in this event.

Diabetes Health Fair:

On November 5th, 45 participants attended the event. 19 Exhibitors provided helpful information and resources to citizens living with Diabetes.

Child Abuse:

November was Child Abuse Prevention Month: As a way to create awareness the Hoke County Health Department and the Hoke Head Start Center held their Annual Child Abuse prevention Symposium for parents and staff on November 3rd.

Happy Kitchen:

The Hoke County Health Department and FirstHealth of the Carolinas collaborated on 2 workshops to introduce citizens to healthy, delicious and low cost foods; in October and November.



Participants engaged in the presentation on natural childbirth at the October 19th Annual Maternity Fair.



Cornelia Murchison, Public Health Educator Facilitating the Symposium on Communicable Diseases at East Hoke Middle



Diabetic Fair goes take advantage of free flu shots by Walgreens in Fayetteville

HEALTH EDUCATION OUTREACH PROGRAMS

Childbirth Education Classes:

Classes are designed to help expectant mothers learn about the process of labor and birth.

The next Class is scheduled to start December 1st from 5:30-7:30 PM

Wednesday of every month from 6-8 PM

The next class is scheduled for December 21st; the topic will be "Cervical Health." This document can also be view on our county website.

Women's Empowerment Workshop:

Classes are designed to help women to become empowered through health. Workshops are scheduled for the 3rd

Baby Think It Over Program:

This program was design to give teens applications on the consequences of becoming an Adolescent parent.

Programs are offered to the high school and the community in the summer. 25 high school students have participated in this Fall school sessions.

2011 Community Assessment:

Is in the process of analyzing community an state data on the health priorities affecting our Community. This data as well as the full document will be available for public dissemination sometime in mid-January.

IT'S TIME TO LIST YOUR TAXES!

ALL persons who own or control business, farm, and any personal property subject to taxation in Hoke County or made improvements to real property, MUST LIST all such property and/or improvements for year 2012 between January 2 and January 31, 2012.

Hoke County has a permanent listing system for real property. Personal property (ex: mobile homes, boats, airplanes, non-licensed vehicles, multi-year tagged trailers, farm and business equipment) **must be listed in January each year.** Failure to list during the month of January will result in a 10% late listing penalty. Personal Property is listed at the Tax office located at 227 N Main St, Raeford. Businesses may request an ex-

tension of time for listing. The request must be in writing and show a good cause. Requests must be received by January 31, 2012.

Any additions or improvements made to your real property must also be listed with the Assessor's office. A building permit does not fulfill this requirement. It is the owners responsibility to notify the tax office of any improvements. This includes but is not limited to additions, remodeling, structures removed, swimming pools, storage buildings, carports, etc.

All Exemption or Exclusion applications are due no later than January 31, 2012 with the exception of the Elderly/Disability exclusions.



The Elderly/Disabled exclusion and the Veteran Disability exclusion applications will be accepted until June 1, 2012

Present use applications are also due no later than January 31, 2012. For more information, visit the Hoke County Website, www.hokecounty.net, choose Tax Office under Departments. Tax Forms are available on the web. You may also visit our office at 227 N Main St or reach us by phone at 910-875-8751.

A NOTE FROM THE REGISTER OF DEEDS



The Register of Deeds staff has begun E-Recording Satisfactions. As of October 1, 2011 Registrars can no longer accept Original Deeds of Trust for cancellation. In order to cancel a deed of trust and note, the presenter must present to the ROD staff a "Satisfaction of Security Instrument" with the necessary information provided in the document.

Within the next few weeks, LOGAN SYSTEMS INC., the Vendor for the ROD Office, will begin Scanning the County Land Records dating back to 1911. When the Scanning is complete, all of the Land Records for Hoke County from 1911 through the present will be on the Internet. The Register of Deeds staff is so very pleased that soon we will have reached this very im-

portant Milestone!! The residents of our county, city and state will benefit and will be better served when all of Hoke County's Land Records are available **o n l i n e .**

O n n i e D u d l e y
Your Very Proud
Register of Deeds

HOLIDAY ADOPTIONS

Is your family looking to add a furry member to your family this holiday season? Don't forget about the animals available for adoption at the Hoke County Animal Shelter!

Take a family trip to the animal shelter, spend some

time with the animals, and find one that is the right fit for your family. Many cats and dogs are available for adoption and looking for forever homes.

Some of our animals available for adoption can be viewed online on Petango!



Hoke County Animal Shelter
353 CC Steele Rd.
Raeford, NC 28376
910-875-4827

Hours of Operation
Adoptions: Monday-Friday
9:00am to 4:00pm
Drop Off: Monday-Friday
8:00am to 4:45pm
Owner Claims: Monday-Friday
9:00am to 4:00pm

PUBLIC WORKS NOTICE

HOKE COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS HAS RECEIVED AUTHORIZATION TO BEGIN CONSTRUCTION OF THE PHASE V WATER IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT. THE DASHED AREAS ON THE ATTACHED MAP INDICATE WHERE NEW DISTRIBUTION LINES WILL BE INSTALLED. CITIZENS RESIDING IN THESE AREAS ARE ENCOURAGED TO CONTACT OUR OFFICE AND MAKE EARLY APPLICATION FOR SERVICE IN ORDER TO QUALIFY FOR THE REDUCED TAP FEES. WE ARE LOCATED IN THE L.E. MCLAUGHLIN BUILDING, 423 E. CENTRAL AVE, RAEFORD NC, PH: 910-875-6704

TAP FEE SCHEDULE

TAP-ON FEES (To Include Irrigation)

Construction-Phase Rate:

The tap-on fee during the construction of the water distribution system will be as follows:

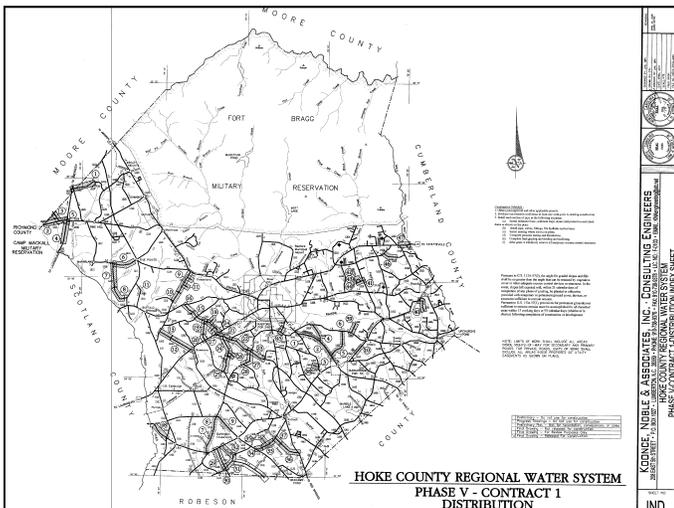
<u>Meter Size</u>	<u>Established Fee</u>
3/4 inch	\$50.00
1 inch	\$100.00
Larger than 1"	Standard Rate

Future Services:

Customers not wishing an immediate connection to the water system, but who wish to take advantage of the discounted tap-on fees available during the construction phase may sign up for a "future service" tap at the following rates:

<u>Meter Size</u>	<u>Established Fee</u>
3/4 inch	\$150.00
1 inch	\$250.00
Larger than 1"	Standard Rate

Future Service rates apply only during the construction phase of the distribution system. With a "Future Service" tap, a meter is not installed until requested by the customer. No monthly billing until meter installed.



HOKE COUNTY REGIONAL WATER SYSTEM, PHASE V, CONTRACTS 1 & 2 WATER MAINS SHALL BE INSTALLED ON ALL OR PORTIONS OF THE FOLLOWING ROADS. CONTACT THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT TO VERIFY THE YOUR AREA WILL BE INCLUDED.

- * QUEWHIFFLE RD. * LEACH RD. * ASHMONT RD. *
- * L.A. SANDY RD. * ADDOR RD. * BOSTIC RD. *
- * MONTROSS RD. * SADDLEBRED LANE * PENDERGRASS RD. *
- * FILLY LANE * FULFORD MCMILLAN RD. * PONY PATH *
- * ROY'S RIDGE * HACKNEY LANE * LINDA'S LANE *
- * SPRING HILL RD. * NORTON RD. * UPCHURCH RD. *
- * JOHN RUSSELL RD. * HWY 20 * WHALEY RD. * DUFFIE RD. *
- * PALMER FARM RD. * MCNEILL FARM RD. * CHILSOM RD. *
- * BLUE SPRINGS RD. * REX CURRIE RD. * OLD MAXTON RD. *
- * MT. ZION RD. * WILSON RD. * TOM MCLAUGHLIN RD. *
- * GOOSE POND RD. * COVINGTON RD. * DIAL RD.

Municipal Election of 2011

Elections are held every year in Hoke County, but some elections are quieter than others.

In odd numbered years, we conduct the Municipal Election for the City of Raeford to elect their Mayor and City Council. Their terms are four years, and the seats are staggered so that the mayor and two council members are elected in one year and three council members are elected two years later.

In November 2011, three seats for city council were open for election. Since the election was limited to the City of Raeford and not held county-wide, and there were no additional issues such as referendums to be considered, this election did not draw a large turnout. The successful candidates were all incumbents.

CITY OF RAEFORD CITY COUNCIL MEMBER (Vote For 3)

4 of 4 Precincts Reporting

	Percent	Votes
Robert L. (Bobby) Conoly	32.60%	118
John O. Jordan	34.25%	124
Mary Neil King	32.60%	118
Write-in	0.55%	2
		362

Elections in 2012

In even numbered years, we conduct primaries for the political parties, and elections for county, state and federal offices.

Filing Dates:
 February 13-29
 June 11-July 6
 July 2-August 6

for County, State, and Federal Offices
 for Soil and Water Conservation Supervisors
 for Board of Education Members

Primary Dates:
 May 8, 2012
 June 26, 2012

for Primary
 for Second Primary

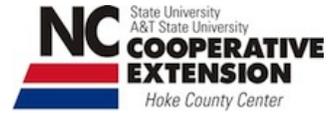
Election Date:
 November 6, 2012

for General Election



Hoke County Offices will be **CLOSED**
Monday and Tuesday
December 26th & December 27th
 in observance of Christmas,
 as well as
Monday, January 2nd
 in Observance of New Year's Day

The Hoke County Solid Waste Convenience Sites and Transfer Station will be **CLOSED** on **Saturday, December 24th** and will **RE-OPEN** on **Tuesday, December 27th** at normally scheduled times



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION CALENDAR OF EVENTS

December 1, FCS, Basic Money Management Workshop for Head Start Parents, Hoke County Head Start, 10:00 am

December 3, FCS, Dazzling Holiday Delight Workshop - Workshop for Diabetics, learn to make healthy desserts using sugar substitutions, 10am - 1:00pm

December 6, Horticulture Specialized Meeting, 12pm

December 8, 4-H Hot Shots Club Meeting, 7pm, ages 9 and up

December 10, PAT, Group Connections for All Enrolled Families, 4 - 6pm

December 10, 4-H Holiday Bake-Off Competition, 9am - 12pm, ages 5 - 18

December 16, Dianne Scarboro's Retirement Reception, 3 - 5pm

December 17, 4-H Holiday Workshop, 9am - 3pm, ages 5 -12, cost \$10

January 13, Local Foods Conference, Albemarle

January 27, District Advisory Conference, Albemarle

January TBA, It's All About You Wellness Program, cost \$20, meet each week for 16 weeks

January TBA, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Education for 3rd Graders at Hawk Eye and West Hoke Elementary as well as 3 nutrition sites for older adults, meet each week for 9 weeks

January TBA, PAT, Group Connections for All Enrolled Families

NEW FACES AT HOKE COUNTY



Hoke County would like to welcome the following new members of our staff!

Health Department
Cynthia "Cindy" Morton
Nursing Supervisor
Edna Huewitt
Case Management Nurse
Erica Dale
Social Worker

Tax Collections
April King

Senior Services
Ms. Tanya Hall- Studivant
SHIIP Coordinator & Information Specialist
Ms. Regina Blue
Nutrition Program Assistant
Ms. Annie Ruth McNeill
Chore-Worker for Senior Adults

Library
Natalie Spencer

E-911 Communications
Michelle Pigott
Djuna Miller-Djuna
Kim Gentry
Roxana Pasado-Munguia
Allison Bronner

DSS
Stefanie Collins
Danielle Woods.
Tera Campbell
LaShara Glover
Nichole Williams

THANK YOU!

Hoke County would like to extend thanks to the following women for their years of service to the County, along with wishes of a happy retirement:

Dianne Scarboro, 30 years
Cooperative Extension

Millicent Diehl, 17 years 4 months
Staff Attorney for Social Services



SPECIAL NOTICE

It is with sadness that we inform you that Mr. Jimmy Carthens has passed away.

Jimmy Carthens served Hoke County for 20 years, and was the Director of

Animal Control.

Jimmy was a kind man blessed with a wonderful family. His smile, his spirit and his goodness will remain alive in the hearts of

everyone who knew him.

To the family and friends, Hoke County sends our deepest condolences and sympathy and prayers.



Holiday Fire Safety

Decorating homes and businesses is a long-standing tradition around the holiday season. Unfortunately, these same decorations may increase your chances of fire. Based on data from the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), an estimated 250 home fires involving Christmas trees, and another 170 home fires involving holiday lights, and other decorative lighting occur each

year. Together, these fires resulted in 20 deaths and 45 injuries. Following a few simple fire safety tips can keep electric lights, candles, and the ever popular Christmas tree from creating a tragedy. Learn how to prevent a fire and what to do in case a fire starts in your home. Make sure all exits are accessible and not blocked by decorations or trees. Help ensure that you have a fire safe holiday season.



FEMA

U.S. Fire Administration

For information and resources on this subject, visit www.usfa.dhs.gov/citizens/focus

Be Safe During the Holiday Season

Robert L. Harvell, Chief Building Inspector

The Holiday season is upon us, and outdoor decorations are being purchased and unpacked with anticipation. The holidays are enhanced by exterior lighting, but it is important to exercise caution when selecting and installing them. Each year, holiday lighting contributes to injuries caused by electrical shock, falls and fires. Holiday lighting fires annually cause property damage in excess of \$16 million. Consider the following to avoid injury as you decorate for the holidays.

- When purchasing outdoor Holiday lighting, look for labels marked with UL or ETL. This indicates the product has been tested by an independent laboratory recognized by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). Outdoor lights with these labels satisfy the minimum standards for product safety.
- When selecting lights for exterior installation, be sure the packaging states that it is designated for outdoor use. Outdoor lighting is weatherproof and designed for temporary operation in harsh winter weather. Do not purchase used Christmas lights or lighting not in the original package.
- When selecting outdoor lights, consider purchasing strings with miniature, low-heat producing bulbs. These lights require less amperage and are less likely to overload electrical outlets.
- Purchase appropriately sized timers to automatically turn lights on and off. Lights should be turned off when people are not present and they should not be left on overnight.
- Electrical outlets for exterior lighting should accommodate three-prong grounded plugs and should be on an electrical circuit protected by a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI). Portable outdoor GFCIs can be purchased at hardware stores if this circuit protection is not available.
- If extension cords are required for outdoor lights, use those designed for outdoor use with three-prong plugs. Never use an indoor cord or a cord without the third prong. Plug the cord into a grounded outlet and select a cord with the shortest length that works for your project. Do not use a 100-foot extension cord for a 10-foot distance. Keep outdoor electrical connections above the ground and out of the snow and water. If extension cords must cross walkways, tape them down.
- When connecting outdoor lighting, be careful not to create a maze of extension cords, plugs and wires that all come from the same electrical outlet. Electrical outlets and timers used for Christmas lights should be readily accessible for quick disconnection or adjustment as necessary.
- When installing lights, be sure to read and follow the manufacturer's instructions. These instructions should be stored with the lights and referred to when purchasing replacement bulbs and on future installations.

- Check the manufacturer's guidelines to determine the number of light strings that may be safely plugged together. If the packaging does not indicate the number, connect no more than three light strings together.
- Before installing newly purchased or previously used Christmas lighting, plug the string in and make sure all the bulbs operate properly. When unpacking outdoor lights used during previous years, carefully inspect them for frayed, loose or bare wires and damaged bulbs or sockets. Discard damaged light strings.
- One of the greatest dangers when installing outdoor lighting involves the use of ladders. Use a high-quality, sturdy ladder that is the proper height. Be sure it is securely positioned. To avoid falls, move the ladder as necessary rather than leaning on it from side to side.
- When installing outdoor lights, use screw-in hooks or other fasteners that will not damage the insulation on the lighting strings. Nails and staple guns can easily cut or damage insulation and conductors.
- Refer to the manufacturer's guidelines to determine the recommended spacing for supports and the maximum span allowed for the light string. Christmas lights are generally designed to span distances of only a few feet and should be supported at intervals every few feet.
- Securely attach outdoor light strings to buildings, trees or other objects to prevent displacement by wind or other weather conditions. When possible, point the lamp sockets down to avoid moisture buildup and do not operate light strings with missing bulbs.
- Unplug outdoor lights when replacing bulbs so there is no danger of shock. Reduce damage to lights by handling them carefully when installing and removing them and when packing and storing.
- Remove outdoor lighting at the end of the Christmas season. Christmas lights are not designed to withstand prolonged exposure to sun and weather.

When installing lights on a Christmas tree, always check the lights to be use the wiring is safe. Always follow directions on the number of light strings that can be connected together. Installing too many strings may cause excessive heat and cause a fire. Be sure to check the water daily if you are using a live tree. To see why it is so important to keep a tree moist, go to http://www.usfa.fema.gov/citizens/home_fire_prev/holiday-seasonal/treefire.shtm. It only takes a few seconds for a dry tree to burn.

These few simple things can be the difference between having a Great Holiday Season or maybe a deadly one. Everyday is the right day to be safe.

From all of us in the Building Inspections Department, may you have a SAFE and enjoyable Holiday Season.

FOCUS ON FIRE SAFETY

Holiday Fire Safety



Decorating homes and businesses is a long-standing tradition around the holiday season. Unfortunately, these same decorations may increase your chances of fire. Based on data from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), an estimated 250 home fires involving Christmas trees and another 170 home fires involving holiday lights and other decorative lighting occur each year. Together, these fires resulted in 21 deaths and 43 injuries.

Following a few simple fire safety tips can keep electric lights, candles, and the ever popular Christmas tree from creating a tragedy. Learn how to prevent a fire and what to do in case a fire starts in your home. Make sure all exits are accessible and not blocked by decorations or trees. Help ensure that you have a fire safe holiday season.

Christmas Trees

What's a traditional Christmas morning scene without a beautifully decorated tree? If your household includes a natural tree in its festivities, take to heart the sales person's suggestion – "Keep the tree watered."

Christmas trees account for hundreds of fires annually. Typically, shorts in electrical lights or open flames from candles, lighters or matches start tree fires. Well-watered trees are not a problem. A dry and neglected tree can be.

Selecting a Tree for the Holidays

Needles on fresh trees should be green and hard to pull back from the branches, and the needles should not break if the tree has been freshly cut. The trunk should be sticky to the touch. Old trees can be identified by bouncing the tree trunk on the ground. If many needles fall off, the tree has been cut too long and, has probably dried out, and is a fire hazard.

Caring for Your Tree

Do not place your tree close to a heat source, including a fireplace or heat vent. The heat will dry out the tree, causing it to be more easily ignited by heat, flame or sparks. Be careful not to drop or flick cigarette ashes near a tree. Do not put your live tree up too early or leave it up for longer than two weeks. Keep the tree stand filled with water at all times.

Disposing of Your Tree

Never put tree branches or needles in a fireplace or wood-burning stove. When the tree becomes dry, discard it promptly. The best way to dispose of your tree is by taking it to a recycling center or having it hauled away by a community pick-up service.

Holiday Lights

Maintain Your Holiday Lights

Inspect holiday lights each year for frayed wires, bare spots, gaps in the insulation, broken or cracked sockets, and excessive kinking or wear before putting them up. Use only lighting listed by an approved testing laboratory.

Do Not Overload Electrical Outlets

Do not link more than three light strands, unless the directions indicate it is safe. Connect strings of lights to an extension cord before plugging the cord into the outlet. Make sure to periodically check the wires – they should not be warm to the touch.

Do not leave holiday lights on unattended!

Holiday Decorations

Use Only Nonflammable Decorations

All decorations should be nonflammable or flame-retardant and placed away from heat vents. If you are using a metallic or artificial tree, make sure it is flame retardant.

Don't Block Exits

Ensure that trees and other holiday decorations do not block an exit way. In the event of a fire, time is of the essence. A blocked entry/exit way puts you and your family at risk.

Never Put Wrapping Paper in the Fireplace

Wrapping paper in the fireplace can result in a very large fire, throwing off dangerous sparks and embers that may result in a chimney fire.

Holiday Candle Care

Avoid Using Lit Candles

If you do use lit candles, make sure they are in stable holders and place them where they cannot be easily knocked down. Never leave the house with candles burning.

Never Put Lit Candles on a Tree

Do not go near a Christmas tree with an open flame – candles, lighters or matches.

As in every season, have working smoke alarms installed on every level of your home, test them monthly and keep them clean and equipped with fresh batteries at all times. Know when and how to call for help. And remember to practice your home escape plan!

Holiday Fire-Safety Tips

As the holidays approach, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is urging people to look for and eliminate potential dangers from holiday lights and decorations that could lead to fires and injuries.

Each year, hospital emergency rooms treat thousands of people for injuries, such as falls, cuts, and shocks related to holiday lights, decorations, and Christmas trees. In addition, Christmas trees are involved in hundreds of fires each year, resulting in deaths, injuries, and property loss and damage.

Keep your family safe this holiday season by following these safety tips.

Trees

- When purchasing an artificial tree, look for the label "Fire Resistant." Although this label does not mean the tree won't catch fire, it does indicate the tree will resist burning and should extinguish quickly.
- When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness. A fresh tree is green; needles are hard to pull from branches and when bent between your fingers, needles do not break. The trunk butt of a fresh tree is sticky with resin, and when tapped on the ground, the tree should not lose many needles.
- When setting up a tree at home, place it away from fireplaces and radiators. Because heated rooms dry live trees out rapidly, be sure to keep the stand filled with water. Place the tree out of the way of foot traffic and do not block doorways.

Lights

- Indoors or outside, only use lights that have been tested for safety by a recognized testing laboratory, which indicates conformance with safety standards.
- Check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections, and throw out damaged sets.
- Use no more than three standard-size sets of lights per single extension cord.
- Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights, and a person touching a branch could be electrocuted.
- Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, house walls, or other firm supports to protect the lights from wind damage. Use only insulated staples, not nails or tacks, to hold strings in place. Or, run strings of lights through hooks (available at hardware stores).
- Turn off all lights when you go to bed or leave the house. The lights could short out and start a fire.
- For added electric-shock protection, plug outdoor electric lights and decorations into circuits protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). Portable outdoor GFCIs can be purchased where electrical supplies are sold. GFCIs can be installed permanently to household circuits by a qualified electrician.

Decorations

- Use only non-combustible or flame-resistant materials to trim a tree. Choose tinsel or artificial icicles of plastic or nonleaded metals. Leaded materials are hazardous if ingested by children.
- Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens. Always use non-flammable holders, and place candles where they will not be knocked down.
- In homes with small children, take special care to avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable, keep trimmings with small removable parts out of the reach of children to avoid the child swallowing or inhaling small pieces, and avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food that may tempt a child to eat them.
- Wear gloves to avoid eye and skin irritation while decorating with spun glass "angel hair." Follow container directions carefully to avoid lung irritation while decorating with artificial snow sprays.

Fireplaces

- Use care with "fire salts," which produce colored flames when thrown on wood fires. They contain heavy metals that can cause intense gastrointestinal irritation and vomiting if eaten. Keep them away from children.
- Do not burn wrapping papers in the fireplace. A flash fire may result as wrappings ignite suddenly and burn intensely.