

Standard No. 1103.3-1

Kern County Fire Department
Fire Prevention



Christmas Trees (Previously Standard 11.2-1)

Fire Marshal

Date: December 3, 1991
Revised: November 1, 2002

This Standard is promulgated in accordance with Section 1.104 of the Kern County Fire Code and is the official interpretation of Section 3.08 of Title 19 and Section 1103.3.3.1 of the Kern County Fire Code which states that Christmas trees must be flame retardant treated.

BACKGROUND

Christmas trees become a serious fire hazard as they age and dry. Once ignited, Christmas trees burn violently. The tremendous heat generated by a burning Christmas tree can easily spread to the remainder of the building and/or block egress paths.

The potential hazard created by Christmas trees must be mitigated. Therefore, Christmas trees which are placed inside of any occupancy, except Group U Occupancies and dwellings and guest rooms of Group R Occupancies, shall be either live or flame retardant treated, or shall be maintained fire safe.

REQUIREMENTS

I. General Requirements

1. Christmas trees shall not be placed in a location which would obstruct or hinder emergency egress.
2. Christmas trees shall not be placed within five (5) feet of any ignition source.
3. The tree shall be maintained in a fire safe condition
 - A. There are 3 methods of satisfying these requirements
 - (a). The tree can receive a fire retardant treatment in accordance with Section II.
 - (b). The tree can be a living Christmas tree and maintained in accordance with Section III.
 - (c). The tree can be maintained as a "fire safe Christmas tree" in accordance with Section IV.

II. Fire Retardant Treatment

1. The cut Christmas tree shall be made flame resistant by application of a flame retardant chemical approved by the California State Fire Marshal.

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2. The flame retardant chemical may be applied by the facility owner or his authorized representative, or by any applicator licensed by the California State Fire Marshal. If the flame retardant chemical is applied for a fee, the applicator shall be licensed by the California State Fire Marshal.
3. Lights and decorations may be placed on any Christmas tree which is made flame resistant.

III. Living Christmas Trees

1. Living Christmas trees may be placed in any occupancy.
2. The Christmas tree shall be considered living if the roots are intact and covered with soil, and the tree is watered regularly.
3. Light and decorations may be placed on any living Christmas tree.

IV. Fire Safe Christmas Trees

1. Christmas trees shall be considered fire safe if the following conditions are satisfied:
 - A. The Christmas tree must have a fresh cut made on the bottom of the trunk immediately before the tree is placed in the tree stand. The fresh cut shall be at least one inch above the original cut.
 - B. The tree shall be placed in a tree stand that is capable of holding water.
 - C. The Christmas tree must be watered regularly so that there is standing water in the tree stand at all times. The level of water must be at least two inches above the cut end of the trunk.
 - D. Lights shall not be used on a Fire Safe Christmas Tree.
 - E. Decorations may be placed on a Fire Safe Christmas Tree.
 - F. The Christmas tree must pass the flame test as follows:
 - (a). A four to six inch piece of the Christmas tree shall be removed from the end of one branch of the tree. This piece shall be held over a two inch flame for 10 seconds. The flame shall then be removed and if the branch does not continue to burn, it shall be considered fire safe.

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- (b). The Christmas tree shall be removed from the occupancy immediately if it fails to pass the flame test.

- G. The Christmas tree shall be removed from the occupancy before it becomes a fire hazard.

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