



City of Bellevue
Fire Prevention Division
425-452-6872

Christmas Trees in Buildings

The following information for the placement and preparation of natural cut Christmas trees in your work place is based upon reasonable good practices and section 806 of the International Fire Code, 2006 Edition, as adopted by Washington State and the City of Bellevue.

The use of natural cut trees inside institutional occupancies such as hospitals, nursing homes, licensed care facilities, and residential care facilities is not allowed due to the limited mobility of residents. The use of artificial, approved trees is appropriate in these cases:

Tree Placement: Never place a natural cut tree or other decorative vegetation in the required path of egress or means of exit from a building.

Flame Retardation: The new fire code no longer requires a flame retardant application on natural cut trees in buildings. Instead, more recent studies suggest that a fresh, well-maintained and watered tree, when monitored in accordance with this document, provides a reasonable degree of safety. Flame retardant applications are not a substitute for tree watering maintenance. If you use flame retardant materials, apply the product in accordance with the manufacture's directions.

Tree Butt Cut and Watering: Cut the trunk bottom at least .5 inch above the original cut just prior to setting up the tree. Place the tree in a support device that is both stable and meets all of the following criteria:

1. The device must hold the tree securely and be of adequate size to avoid tipping over the tree.
2. The device must be capable of containing a minimum 2-day supply of water (see table below).
3. The water level, when full, must cover the tree stem at least 2 inches. Maintain the water level above the fresh cut and check it at least once daily.

Support Stand Water Capacity

Tree Stem Diameter (inches)	Minimum Support Stand Water Capacity (gallons)	Typical Daily Evaporation Amount (gallons)
Up to 4	1	¼ to 1
4 to 6	1 ½	1 ¼ to 1 ½
7 to 8	2	1 ¾ to 2
9 to 12	3	2 ¼ to 3
13 and over	4	Over 3

Dryness: Remove the tree from the building whenever the tree is determined to be dry by needle pliability or discoloration, if the needles or leaves fall off readily when a tree branch is shaken, or if the needles are brittle and break when bent between the thumb and index finger. Check the tree daily for dryness.

Open Flames: Remember, do not use candles and open flames on or near a tree. In addition, keep natural cut trees away from heat vents and any open flame or heat-producing devices—a distance at least equal to the height of the tree.

Electric Lights: Use only listed electrical decorations. Check lights carefully before putting them up. Don't use them if cords are worn or frayed, if plugs are damaged, or if sockets are loose. Never use electrical lights on metallic trees. This could create a serious electrical shock hazard. And lastly, be sure to turn off your holiday lights before leaving the building at closing time.

Should you have any questions, please call the City of Bellevue Fire Department, Fire Prevention Division, 425-452-6872. Taking a little extra time with your tree will help make certain that the tragedy of fire will be avoided this holiday season.

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