



MELISSA MINUTE

NOVEMBER 2009



Sounds of the Season: A Fire Safe Holiday

By: City of Melissa Fire Chief Perry Elliott

The sounds of the season are upon us again. Some of our fondest memories are made by sounds of Christmas songs, church bells, sleigh bells, crackling fires and sirens? We can all do without the sounds of screaming sirens, but unfortunately this last one is the only sound many people of our state and great nation will remember this year. The most joyous of times can also be deadly. Christmas trees are involved in approximately 400 fires annually, according to the National Fire Protection Association, typically resulting in more than a dozen deaths, dozens of injuries and more than \$10 million in property loss and damage. Short-circuiting tree lights are cited as the leading cause. As the holidays approach, the Melissa Fire Department in affiliation with the State Fire Marshal's Office offer these safety tips for setting up and decorating Christmas trees that will minimize the risk of fire and injuries.

If you're buying an artificial tree, it should bear the "Fire Resistant" label. While this type of tree can catch fire, it will resist burning and should extinguish quickly. If you're buying a natural tree, buy the freshest you can find. A fresh tree is green, needles are hard to pull from branches and when bent between your fingers, needles do not break. The trunk is sticky with resin, and when tapped on the ground, the tree should not lose many needles. Watch out for trees with a greenish cast to their trunks and branches; many growers spray trees with green paint to make them look more appealing. Cut at least one inch off the trunk's base to expose fresh wood for better water absorption. A tree will absorb as much as a gallon of water or more in the first 24 hours and one or more quarts a day thereafter. A seal of dried sap will form over the cut stump in four to six hours if water drops below the base of the tree, preventing the tree from absorbing water later when the tree stand is refilled. If a seal does form, another fresh cut will need to be made. To maximize freshness and minimize fire risk, keep the tree outdoors for a few days in a bucket filled with water before bringing it indoors to decorate. The tree stand should hold at least one gallon of water. Because heated rooms dry out natural trees rapidly, check the water level daily and keep the stand filled with water.

Set up the tree away from fireplaces, portable heaters, heater vents and televisions. Place it out of the way of traffic and do not block doorways. Use thin guy wires to secure tall trees to walls or ceiling; the wires will be almost invisible. Use only lights tested for safety by a recognized testing laboratory, such as Underwriters' Laboratories. 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. Miniature lights are preferred, for their cool-burning bulbs. Position bulbs so they are not in direct contact with needles or ornaments. Use no more than three standard-size sets of lights per single extension cord (maximum of 200 miniature lights or 150 larger lights).

Only one extension cord should be used per outlet. Be careful where you place electrical cords. Don't run electrical cords under rugs; walking traffic can weaken the insulation and the wires can overheat, increasing the chances for fire or electric shock. Be careful when placing cords behind or beneath furniture; pinched cords can fray and short. Keep animals away from cords to avoid entanglement and chewing. Keep cords and lights away from the tree's water supply. 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. Turn off all lights before going to bed or leaving the house. The lights could short out and start a fire. Use only non-combustible or flame-resistant materials to trim a tree. Never use lighted candles on a tree (even an artificial tree) or near other evergreens. Always use non-flammable holders, and place candles where they will not be knocked over. Decorative lighted villages, Nativity scenes, electric trains, and other electrically powered scenery and figures should be monitored like other decorative lights.

Following these common sense guidelines should greatly reduce the risk of fire in your home this year. From all of us at the Melissa Fire Department and the City of Melissa we encourage you to: Think Safe, Be Safe. Wishing you the warmest of Holiday Cheer and hoping this year's sounds of the season are your most memorable yet.

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MANAGEMENT TEAM

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City Administrator 972-838-2338

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Jan Clark,
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Gail Dansby,
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Dana Nixon, Development
Services Coordinator 972-838-2036

Duane Smith,
Police Chief 972-838-2033

Perry Elliott,
Fire Chief 972-837-1268

Brian Akins, Public Works
Superintendent 469-853-9800

City Hall is located at:

901 State Highway 121
Melissa, TX 75454-9501
Call (972) 838-2338
Fax (972) 837-2452
www.cityofmelissa.com



Tips from North Texas Poison Center- Holiday Turkey Tips:

Provide a healthy family feast by following these food preparation tips:



Do:

- Expiration: Make sure that the sell-by-date has not expired.
- Defrosting: Keep turkey in its original wrapping, refrigerated until ready to cook. Defrost a frozen turkey in a refrigerator or cold water bath. In the fridge, allow one day for every 5 pounds of turkey. In a cold water bath, change the water every 30 minutes. A 20-pound turkey will take approximately 12 hours to defrost in cold water.
- Cooking: Using a meat thermometer, cook the turkey until its internal temperature is 180 degrees. To test “doneness”, pierce turkey in the thickest area of the thigh, making sure the juices run clear, not pink. Remove the stuffing immediately after the turkey is cooked and place in a separate dish.
- Storage: Store the turkey and stuffing separately in the refrigerator. Use leftover turkey within 3-4 days of cooking. Use leftover stuffing (and gravy) within 1-2 days.

Don't:

- Don't defrost a turkey at room temperature. (Bacteria can multiply on the outside before the inside layers have defrosted).
- Don't partially cook the turkey one day and continue roasting the next day.
- Don't stuff the bird the night before cooking.
- Don't leave leftovers out on the counter longer than 2 hours.
- Don't store leftover stuffing in the bird.
- Don't refreeze a thawed uncooked turkey.

Holiday Greetings from the Melissa Public Library

On December 22 & 23 (Tuesday & Wednesday) we will host a special craft time at the Library from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. This is in addition to the normal Monday 10:00 a.m. Story time. We will be closed December 24, 25, and 26 for the Holiday Break. Thank you to the patrons who paid their fines with items for the Melissa Food Pantry. The community thanks you too. A special thanks to Wanda Powell and the Friends of the Library for their support throughout the year; without them we would not have the quality Summer Reading Program, Monday Story time, or as many special events during the year. ~Merry Christmas!

CITY HALL HOLIDAY CLOSURES:

- THANKSGIVING: NOVEMBER 26-27, 2009
- CHRISTMAS EVE: DECEMBER 24, 2009
- CHRISTMAS DAY: DECEMBER 25, 2009
- NEW YEARS DAY: JANUARY 1, 2010



Christmas in Melissa – Join us for the Annual Christmas Parade, Bazaar and Tree Lighting Saturday December 5th!

Christmas Parade :

- Theme: Home for the Holidays
- When: Line Up begins at 9:30 am and Step Out is at 10:00 am
- Where: Melissa High School parking lot. Parade Begins on Cardinal Drive and travels through the Villages of Melissa

Holiday Bazaar:

Picture opportunities with Santa, Cookies, Hot Chocolate and Bazaar will be offered after the parade at the Melissa Middle School Cafetorium until 2:00 p.m. The Parade and Bazaar are sponsored by the Melissa Area Chamber of Commerce and the City of Melissa. For more information please contact the MACC at 972-837-4277.

Christmas Tree Lighting:

- When: 6:30PM.
- Where: Bob Miller Park
- There will be Hot Chocolate and cookies for your enjoyment.
- There will also be a Guest Speaker to Light the Tree. The event is sponsored by the Friends of the Melissa Parks



Openings on City Boards:

The City of Melissa currently has two vacancies on its Boards and Commissions. If you are interested in applying for either of these openings you can find the application by going to our website at www.cityofmelissa.com and click on City Boards then follow the link to the application form. The City has current vacancies on the following boards:

- 4B Community and Economic Development Corporation (1)
- Library Advisory Board (1)

For more information, please call 972-838-2338

