

Southern Pines Police Department
Safety Tips
Holiday Safety

Fresh Trees

Many people will travel to their favorite tree farm to harvest a fresh holiday tree or purchase a cut one from a local vendor. Here are a few tips for keeping your holidays a bit safer when putting up your tree. Remember to place your tree several feet from any heat source, particularly a fireplace or wood stove. Avoid heating ducts or other appliances that can cause the tree to heat up and remember to keep the tree watered every day. Not only will this prolong the life of the tree, it will help keep the needles from falling and reduce the fire risk of a dried out tree. Make sure the tree is secured properly in a stand that is adequate for the size of the tree and keep ornaments and decorations from making it top-heavy or unbalanced. Check wires of electrical devices such as lights or ornaments to make sure they are not frayed or in need of repair. If they are, throw them out and purchase a new set of lights. Make sure your strings of lights are UL listed and designed for how you will use them (indoor, outdoor, etc.). Check them often and if they get too hot, consider replacing them. If packages are to be placed near or under the tree, keep lights away from them. Some bulbs can get hot enough to burn wrapping paper. Place your tree near an electrical outlet that is on a switch or is easy to access. Keep use of extension cords to a minimum but if you use one, make sure it is listed for the wattage your lights consume. Don't leave sockets empty if a bulb burns out. It is better to keep the burned out bulb in the socket than to let little fingers find their way into an empty socket. Keep pets away from the tree to avoid it being pulled over. Remember to unplug or turn off the tree lights while you are away. Safety is a year round focus that should be adapted to the seasons. Take a few moments to review your holiday decorations, inside and out, to look for any potential safety problems.

Thefts

Many of us have seen the recent movie or the not-so-recent television cartoon about the Grinch who stole Christmas. Unfortunately, some of us have had the experience of a real-life grinch who stole our holiday decorations. This is the time of the year when, for whatever reason, some thieves take pleasure in stealing decorations, lights and outdoor displays from our homes, businesses and places of worship. What can we do about this? Well, the first thing is to anchor the item in the ground as securely as possible. Not only will this protect the decoration from wind, it may slow down a thief intent on stealing it. A bicycle style cable lock can be used for higher valued decorations to secure them to trees, fences or other fixed objects. Strings of lights can be secured by inexpensive cable ties. This will also help keep the string in place and reduce the possibility of the lights coming unplugged or falling into an area that may cause a safety problem. The best deterrent to this type of theft is an observant and involved neighborhood. Get to know your neighbors and who belongs. Be observant of something or someone that looks out of place and be suspicious of someone close to a house when it is not the homeowner. Call 911 immediately to report these suspicious activities and be prepared to provide a description of the person and vehicle, if applicable, and the last location and direction or travel you saw. Consider forming or joining a Neighborhood Watch group to learn more about crime prevention and how to better work together as neighbors to make a positive impact on your neighborhood.

Shopping

While there are only a few days of the busy shopping season left, it is still important to be aware of some simple steps you can take while shopping. Stores are typically very busy this time of year with last minute shoppers, but they remain busy throughout the end of the year. Remember to only carry the cash you will need and do not "flash" large amounts. If paying for purchases with a credit card keep track of your card. Don't let the clerk leave your sight with your credit card. And remember to take all of your carbon copies with you. Take a look at the "Shopping Safety" Tip for more information.

For more information or a presentation on this topic, contact the Community Services Coordinator at (910) 692-2732.