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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Real Christmas Tree Safety Tips, Not Scare Tactics

(Chesterfield, MO)- It's that time of year when more than 30 million homes in the U.S. will decorate with a farm-grown Christmas tree. It's also a time when consumers will read or see the "Christmas Tree fire story" and be scared out of buying a real tree. Many people believe "Christmas tree fires happen all the time." The truth is it's extremely rare for a cut Christmas tree to be accidentally ignited in a home fire. Between 1980 and 2005, the number of home fires where a Christmas tree was the first item ignited declined 75 percent.

The growers and retailers of farm-grown trees have been working with fire safety officials, scientists and testing labs for years to provide scientifically proven steps on how to properly display a harvested tree to ensure high moisture content. These tips can be found at the National Christmas Tree Association (NCTA) Web site at www.realchristmastrees.org.

"Our industry works very hard at educating ourselves on the best way to get a tree from our farm to the retail outlet to consumers' homes," said NCTA President Mark Steelhammer. "Hopefully people will follow our care instructions and not be fooled by dramatized news stories."

Often, consumers are told that, "Christmas Trees can cause a fire in a manner of seconds." This is highly erroneous and unethical. A National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) published report on Christmas Tree Fires shows just the opposite. First of all, a cut Christmas tree has NEVER, ever, ever in history CAUSED a fire. Fires are caused by sparks, flames, heat or chemical reactions.

Secondly, if you look at NFPA data, you see that a confirmed average of 111 fires per year between 2002 and 2005 in the U.S. were ones in which a cut tree was the first item ignited in a residential fire. During the same period of the report, an average of 28 million cut Christmas Trees was displayed. Divide 111 by 28 million. You get 0.0000039, or 0.0004%.

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Finally, another interesting item in the NFPA report is that fire officials state clearly that artificial trees also catch on fire every year. Currently, no testing lab or standards exist for those products to meet in order to print the words "flame retardant" on their packaging. They're really just words on a box. Fake trees catch on fire every year. According to the NFPA report, 28% of confirmed residential fires where a Christmas tree was the first item ignited involved a fake tree. But consumers are seldom told this.

Consumers are encouraged to follow the NFPA and scientists' guidelines on how to display a farm-grown Christmas tree and not be scared by people with misleading information. For more information, visit www.realchristmastree.org.

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