Santa Clara Fire Department

Christmas Trees in New and Existing Buildings

The State of California has adopted regulations regulating the display of natural cut Christmas trees in commercial occupancies. The restrictions for the displaying of Christmas trees in commercial occupancies is set forth in Title 19, Public Safety Code of the California Code of Regulations and Section 806 of the International Fire Code (IFC).

The display of natural cut Christmas trees shall be according to the following table.

Natural Cut Christmas Trees in Buildings		
Occupancy Classification	**Sprinklered Building**	**Non-Sprinklered Building**
A – Public assembly occupancies with an occupant load more than 49 persons including churches and restaurants.	Allowed [1]	Allowed [1]
B – Business type occupancies including professional services, offices and restaurants with an occupant load less than 49 persons.	Allowed	Allowed
E – Educational and day care type occupancies for children 2½ years of age through the 12th grade.	Allowed [1]	Allowed [1]
F – Factory or manufacturing type occupancies.	Allowed	Allowed
H – Hazardous occupancies.	Allowed	Allowed
I – Institutional type occupancies in which people are cared for or are living in a supervised environment.	Allowed [1]	Allowed [1]
M – Mercantile type occupancies.	Allowed	Allowed
R-1 – Transient type residential occupancies including boarding houses, hotels and motels.	Allowed [1]	Allowed [1]
R-2 – Non-transient type residential occupancies that contain more than two dwelling units including apartment houses, convents, dormitories and monasteries.	Allowed [1]	Allowed [1, 2]
R-4 – Residential care/assisted living facilities for more than six ambulatory clients.	Allowed [1]	Allowed [1]
S – Storage type occupancies.	Allowed	Allowed

[1] Natural cut Christmas trees must be treated with an approved fire retardant treatment by a State licensed fire retardant applicator. The tree must have an approved tag verifying the applicator's name, license number and date of treatment.

[2] Natural cut Christmas trees shall be allowed within dwelling units of Group R-2 occupancies.

The displaying of Christmas trees in commercial occupancies shall comply with the following:

1. Natural cut trees shall have the trunk bottoms cut off at least ½ inch above the original cut and shall be placed in a support device. ***IFC Section 806.1.***
2. **Support Devices.** Tree support devices that holds the tree in an upright position shall be of a type that is stable and that meets all of the following criteria: ***IFC Section 806.1.2.***
   a. The device shall hold the tree securely and be of an adequate size to avoid tipping over the tree.

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b. The device shall be capable of containing a minimum two-day supply of water.
c. The water level, when full, shall cover the tree stem at least 2 inches. The water level shall be maintained above the fresh cut and checked at least once daily.

3. **Dryness.** The tree shall be removed from the building whenever the needles fall off readily when the tree branch is shaken or if the needles are brittle and break when bent. The tree shall be checked daily for dryness. ***IFC Section 806.1.3.***

4. **Artificial Trees.** Artificial Christmas trees shall meet the flame propagation performance criteria of NFPA 701. Meeting the flame propagation performance criteria of NFPA 701 shall be documented and certified by manufacturer in an approved manner. ***IFC Section 806.2.***

5. **Obstruction of Means of Egress.** The required width of any portion of the means of egress shall not be obstructed by Christmas trees. ***IFC Section 806.3.***

6. **Open Flames.** Candles and open flames shall not be used on or near Christmas trees. ***IFC Section 806.4.***

7. **Heat Sources.** Natural cut trees shall be kept a distance from heat vents and any open flame or heat-producing devices at least equal to the height of the tree. ***IFC Section 806.4.***

8. **Electrical Fixtures and Wiring.** The use of unlisted electrical wiring and lighting on all Christmas trees shall be prohibited. The use of electrical wiring and lighting on artificial trees constructed entirely of metal shall be prohibited. ***IFC Section 806.5.***

9. **Flame Retardant Treatment.** In A, E, I, R-1, R-2 and R-4 occupancies, Christmas trees shall be treated with a flame retardant treatment as approved by the California State Fire Marshal. The trees shall have a tag attached to them that verify the date and name of the fire retardant applicator. ***California Code of Regulations, Title 19, Public Safety Code, Division 1, Section 3.08.***

10. **Living Christmas Trees.** Living Christmas trees that are planted, growing in a soil medium and are cared for properly are exempt from the restrictions of the California Fire Code.

11. **Private Dwellings.** While the California Fire Code does not restrict the display of Christmas trees in private dwelling units it is recommended that requirements 1 through 9 be followed to ensure that Christmas trees are displayed in a safe manner.