

Supervisor Romaine Joins Town Chief Fire Marshal to Demonstrate Christmas Tree Fire Hazard

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Farmingville, NY – On December 9, Supervisor Ed Romaine, Councilmen Dan Panico and Neil Foley joined Town Chief Fire Marshal Chris Mehrman (pictured) for a dramatic demonstration to illustrate the destructive fire hazard associated with the improper care of live Christmas trees. Utilizing a "burn pod" furnished to simulate a living room, members of the Town's Division of Fire Prevention attempted to ignite a fresh Christmas tree, which did not burn. They replaced the watered tree with a dry, unwatered tree which quickly ignited in a ball of fire, causing damage to the items in the "burn pod." The Chief Fire Marshal also demonstrated the proper use of Christmas tree lights, menorahs in use during the holidays.

"This was a frightening, first-hand look at what could happen if Christmas trees are not sufficiently watered," said Supervisor Romaine. "I urge everyone to make sure when purchasing a fresh Christmas tree to keep it properly watered to prevent a fire like we witnessed today."

"No one ever thinks a tragedy can happen to them until it does," commented Councilman Dan Panico. "Please remember to inspect your lights for frayed wires or broken bulbs and only buy those lights tested by an independent laboratory."

Councilman Foley said, "It took only seconds for this fire to develop and consume the burn pod and cause severe damage. I would hope that people take heed, follow the fire safety precautions and have a safe and happy holiday season." According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), Christmas trees are the item first ignited in an estimated average of 210 reported home structure fires per year. These fires result in an annual average of seven civilian deaths, 19 civilian injuries, and \$17.5 million in direct property damage. On average, one of every 31 reported home Christmas tree fires result in a death, compared to an average of one death per 144 total reported home fires. The NFPA offers the following tips for live Christmas tree safety:

- * If using a real tree, select one with fresh, green needles that do not fall off when touched.
- * Before placing the tree in the stand, cut 1" - 2" from the base of the trunk.
- * Make sure the tree is at least three feet away from any heat source, such as fireplaces, radiators, candles, heat vents or lights.
- * Make sure the tree is not blocking an exit.
- * Add water to the tree stand. Be sure to add water daily.

To learn more about how to keep fire-safe this holiday season, go to the National Fire Protection Association website at www.nfpa.org.

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