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California State Fire Marshal Informational Bulletin

Christmas Tree Ornament Heat Detectors

It has come to our attention that a “Christmas Tree Fire Alarm” is being marketed illegally in California again this year. The unit is designed to look like a holiday tree ornament and is frequently advertised in mail order catalogs. This Information Bulletin has been issued to alert consumers and fire officials that the California State Fire Marshal has approved **NO** heat or smoke detector for use on any Christmas tree.

Section 13114(b) of the California Health and Safety Code mandates that all fire alarm devices and components, including smoke and heat detectors, must be approved and listed by the State Fire Marshal prior to their being sold or marketed in the state. This statute assures that these units are designed and manufactured in accordance with established minimum standards.

Consumers and fire service professionals should note that the “Christmas Tree Fire Alarm” is NOT approved by the State Fire Marshal even though it may bear a Underwriters Laboratories (UL) label. The UL label is for the plastic housing and has nothing to do with the effectiveness of the unit as a heat detector

Even if the components of a heat or smoke detector meet the established minimum standards, the use of such units is inappropriate in or near a holiday tree. Because of the significant flammability of natural Christmas trees, fires involving such are oftentimes extremely fast-moving and very volatile. Use of a smoke or heat detector on a Christmas tree, therefore, is not only an ineffective early-warning device but may give the consumer a false sense of protection or security.

Questions concerning these and other fire alarm or smoke detector products may be directed to:

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Building Materials Listing (BML) Program
California State Fire Marshal
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