## U.S. Fire Administration / National Fire Academy

# Coffee Break Training

## Topic: Holiday Season Decorative Vegetation

**Learning Objective:** *The student shall be able to identify the fire safety requirements for holiday season vegetation in buildings.*

The traditional holiday season is upon us, and that means more challenges for fire and safety inspectors. Overflowing merchandise displays, crowded aisles, bustling shoppers, electric lights, candles, and holiday vegetation combine to create a potential fire disaster.

Fire inspectors should use this time to take a close look at their code requirements for decorative displays and vegetation. In general, natural cut trees are prohibited in assembly, educational, institutional, mercantile, and multifamily dwellings that are not protected by automatic sprinklers. Trees never should be located where they might hinder egress.

The tree support or stand should be stable, and prevent the tree from tipping. It should have a water reservoir with at least a 2-day capacity, and the water level should cover at least 2 inches (51 mm) of the trunk. The reservoir should be checked daily.



This natural holiday tree should not be permitted in this nonsprinklered Group R hotel lobby.

If the natural cut tree becomes so dry that the needles or leaves fall off when a branch is shaken, it should be removed.

Candles and other open flames should be kept away from all natural vegetation. Any electric lights or equipment used on or near the vegetation should be listed by a third-party testing laboratory, and be in good condition.

Artificial trees or vegetation displays should meet the fire-retardant property requirements of NFPA 701, *Standard Methods of Fire Tests for Flame Propagation of Textiles and Films*. The property owner or tenant should be able to provide documentation of compliance with that Standard. (See Coffee Break Training 2007-38 for more information.)

For additional information, refer to *International Fire Code*®, Chapter 8; and NFPA 1, *Uniform Fire Code*®, Chapter 10.