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City fire marshal stresses holiday safety

By **ZACK CINEK** The Daily Journal

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Decorations have been placed and the lights have been strung and maybe some early presents have been placed under Christmas trees in Ukiah.

With two days to Christmas it is also the season to be cautious of holiday-related fire hazards like Christmas trees and Christmas lights. Ukiah Fire Marshal Chuck Yates urges residents to keep Christmas trees watered and to keep the water fresh, also being cautious of pets or a warm house that can dry out a tree.

"When the needles come off it is time to pull it," Yates said. Keeping a tree away from candles and heaters is also advised by the Ukiah Fire Department.

Christmas lights should not be used if the cord is frayed, and residents are asked to take note that old-fashioned lights with hot bulbs are becoming harder to find.

Check smoke alarm batteries and pick up wrapping paper when you are done opening gifts, Yates said. Winter is also a time to be conscious of heater safety, and that includes keeping objects away from heaters.

"We get those fires all the time," Yates said. Chimney fires, when wood fires are allowed, can be avoided by maintaining a clean chimney.

"Clean your chimney," Yates said, "clean it, clean it,

clean it."

In Mendocino County, the Air Quality Management District administers wood burning regulations.

Chris Brown is Mendocino's Air Pollution Control Officer, and stresses that wood stoves are not to be used for burning garbage.

"It is against the law to use them to burn anything other than wood," Brown said, "They are not an incinerator," he said.

Yates and Brown both noted the hazards of burning wrapping paper, which may cause a fire on a rooftop or down a chimney. "No wrapping paper, and Christmas trees cannot be burned," said Brown.

Julie Price, of Solid Waste Systems, said that the Ukiah transfer station will be accepting trees without flocking or tinsel at no charge through Jan. 9.

"We will be accepting for free at the transfer station for two weeks after Christmas," Price said. She said people may also cut their trees up so that they fit in a green bin with the lid closed.

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