

# Welcome Winter!

From The Staff

Place  
Refrigerator  
Magnet  
HERE

at Shires Housing

## IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Shires Housing Office: 802-442-8139 ext. 0

Regular Maintenance Requests are to be called into the main office.

EMERGENCY MAINTENANCE ONLY - 1-844-256-4706

## IMPORTANT DATES:

Shires Housing Christmas Tree Removal Day - January 21, 2018

MAU Nordic Ski Team Christmas Tree Removal Day - January 6, 2018

**Refer a  
Friend**  
to Shires Housing  
and get  
**\$100.00  
OFF**  
Your Next Month's  
Rent!\*

## Keep It Simple.

Our mission is simple. We provide top-quality apartments at prices that fit the budgets of regular working folks. Anything we can do as a community to improve the quiet enjoyment of your home, to keep costs low, and to improve our environment to be safe and welcoming for everyone is what we want to hear from you.

## We Want Your Thoughts & Feedback!

### Stop by, call, write, or e-mail us!

Our Shires Housing office is located at 302A South Street.  
Mail: Shires Housing, P.O. Box 1247 • Bennington, VT 05201  
Phone: 802-442-8139 • Fax 802-442-5125  
www.shireshousing.org • info@shireshousing.org



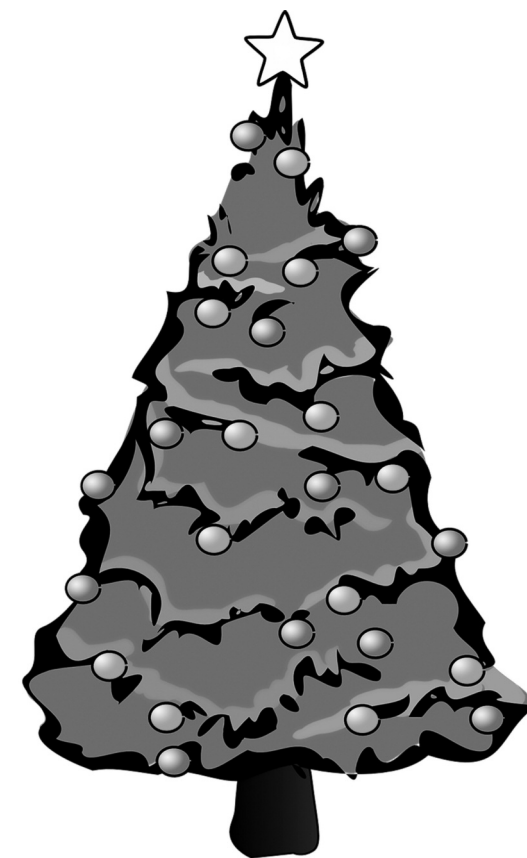
# Newsletter

  
Vol. 4, No. 3  
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## Christmas Tree Safety

### Preventing Home Fires This Holiday Season

Between 2011 and 2015 U.S. fire departments responded to an average of 200 home fires every year that had been started by Christmas trees, according to the NFPA report. This is a serious issue, one that should never take away from the joy of a beautifully lit tree to gather around during the holidays, but serious none the less. So, in order to keep you safe this season we've rounded up 10 ways to prevent Christmas tree fires.



1. **When choosing a tree, look for one that is fresh and has green needles that don't fall out.** Brownish needles mean the tree is dried out and more prone to catch fire. Maybe it's not the biggest or the most full tree on the lot, but picking the greenest tree is better than losing everything to a fire.

2. **Water your tree daily to prevent it from drying out.** This goes back to the same issue with #1, a dry tree is more likely to catch fire.

3. **Check the manufacturer's labels to ensure you use only lights and decorations that are flame-retardant.** Look for a nationally recognized testing laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories, Intertek or the Canadian Standards Association, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

4. **Check holiday lights for frayed wires or excessive wear.** Ok, yes, you went through all that trouble a couple years back to get flame-retardant lights. But time wears on everything, and worn lights can spark and start a fire. Be like Santa, check them twice!

5. **Don't connect more than three strands of mini-string sets and a maximum of 50 bulbs for screw in bulbs.** This is not a "bigger-is-better" situation. The more lights you have lit means the more energy and heat is being generated and the more likely there will be a broken light in the set.

6. **Keep your tree at least 3 feet away from any heat source,** such as a fireplace, radiator, candles or lights.

7. **Make sure your tree is not blocking an exit.** In case there is a fire, you want a way to get out.

8. **Always turn off lights on a tree before going to bed or leaving your home.** Santa can appreciate a well decorated tree whether it has been lit or not. So get to bed on time and turn the lights off before you do.

9. **Get rid of a tree when its needles start dropping. It means the tree is drying out.** Thankfully following steps #1 and #2 will extend this deadline as long as possible.

10. **Check that your smoke alarm is working properly!** A smoke alarm that isn't working properly, or doesn't have a working battery, won't save you in case of a fire.

These easy steps will help ensure that you have a happy and safe holiday. Shires Housing residents are also reminded that candles are not permitted on the premises, one less fire hazard to worry about! And if you're worried you won't have time or can't move your tree out on your own once the time comes, the Shires Housing maintenance staff will be collecting trees after the 21st. (See inside for more details.)

**INSIDE: Drip Pan Do's and Don'ts**

# The Bulletin Board

**See Something? Say Something.** – We don't know if there are adverse things happening in your Shires neighborhood. We don't live there, you do. Help us to help you by reporting any activity you feel is suspicious, irregular or out of the ordinary. Your safety and that of your family's is our main concern.

**Take Out The Trash** – Please make sure you are putting the recyclables in the recycle bin and the trash in the trash bin. Don't confuse the two!! Also, please break down all boxes, large or small. In doing so, you're helping to keep the dumpsters neat and will provide more room. Be considerate of your neighbors, don't leave anything laying on the ground. It's your community, only you can keep it neat and pretty.

**CONTROL YOUR SPEED!** – If you're sick of hearing this, imagine how we feel having to always address it. Please slow down while driving in the residential areas. Think of the kids in your community, think of the wear and tear on your vehicle. **SLOW DOWN, PLEASE!!!**

**Expecting a tax refund next year? Put your refund to work for you!** – Tax refunds can make it feel like Christmas in springtime. With a sudden boost to your bank account, you can look forward to going on a shopping spree, catching up on debt or squirreling the refund away in savings. You can even use it to pay ahead on your rent! If you find yourself frequently trying to catch up on your rent payments and paying late payment charges, perhaps you may want to put that money toward your rent and get ahead a little. Give the money a purpose. Don't just let it sit in your checking account, or let it vanish before you know it.

## Recycle Your Christmas Tree

An after-Christmas gift for you! Shires Housing will be picking up any Christmas Trees that are left by the dumpster after the 21st. Only those trees at the dumpster by the end of this day will be picked up. This is a free service that should be taken advantage of.

If you're interested in donating your tree, the Mount Anthony Union High School Nordic Ski Team is also collecting Christmas trees after the holidays. This annual tradition is a fundraising effort for the team. Suggested donations are \$5-\$15, or more if you would like.

While Santa knows every boy and girl he needs to deliver to in every house, these hardworking teens can only make it to your home if they first know that there is a tree ready to be picked up. If you are interested you can contact Rachel at (802) 681-5177 or at [mautrees@gmail.com](mailto:mautrees@gmail.com) to schedule a pickup.

**SAVE the DATE  
FREE Pickup  
For Trees After:  
Sunday  
January 21,  
2018**

All tinsel and garland must be removed from your tree before bringing it out to be picked up. Then, attach an envelope to the tree with a bit of tape or a single staple with your donation to the team and/or a kind thank you note for their efforts.

Don't miss the date! Regretfully, if your tree is not in the correct location by the time of pick up you will be responsible for the disposal of your tree. The team will be making their rounds on Saturday January 6th from 9am to 1pm. Please have your tree ready and waiting outside your home by 9am on Saturday morning.

Did you know recycled trees are most commonly used for mulch, erosion protection, habitat creation and shoreline stabilization? That means it's great for you, someone else is responsible for removing the tree from your home when it's time, and great for the environment.

## Maintenance Assistance

When notifying the office of a maintenance concern, please consider giving "PTE – Permission To Enter" – for your unit if you are not home. We respect your privacy. If we don't have this verbal "okay", we have to send our "Intent to Enter" letter, which delays our staff from coming due to the Post Office delivering that letter. So please, when calling to notify us of a needed repair, please let us know that we have your permission to enter. Having your "PTE" gives our guys more opportunity to address your issue, without the office having to send you a letter with a two week timeframe. This may get your issue taken care of in a more timely fashion.

The office maintenance line - option#4 - is no longer in service. Please call the main office directly to report any maintenance concerns. **802- 442-8139 ext. 0**



## Trick Questions



1. What two words, when combined, hold the most letters?
2. A monkey, a squirrel and a bird are racing to the top of a coconut tree. Who will get the banana first, the monkey, the squirrel or the bird?
3. If you throw a red stone into the blue sea, what will it become?
4. You're a bus driver. At the first stop, 4 people get on. At the second stop, 8 people get on, at the third stop, 2 people get off and at the fourth stop, everyone gets off. The question is, .... what color are the bus driver's eyes?

**Turn the page upside down for answers:**

1. Post Office
2. None of them, because you can't get a banana from a coconut tree!
3. Wet.
4. The color of your eyes, you're the bus driver!

## Warm Soup For Winter Nights

**CREAMY TOMATO TORTELLINI SOUP**

Prep Time: 5 minutes  
Cooking Time: 15 minutes  
Serves: 5 people

### INGREDIENTS

2 whole large cloves of garlic, minced  
½ an onion diced  
2 tbsp of olive oil  
2 10¾ oz. cans condensed tomato soup  
½ cup sun dried tomatoes chopped  
1½ cups milk  
2 cups half and half  
2 cups vegetable broth  
2 tsp Italian seasoning  
salt and pepper to taste  
9 oz. package of cheese filled tortellini  
½ cup shredded parmesan cheese

### DIRECTIONS

- Saute garlic and onions with olive oil in a large stock/soup pot over medium heat until golden brown. Be sure to keep an eye on it so it doesn't get too brown or burnt.

- Add tomato soup, sun dried tomatoes, milk, half and half, vegetable stock and seasonings. Bring to a simmer.

- Drop tortellini into the soup. Cook according to the package directions - usually about 8 minutes.

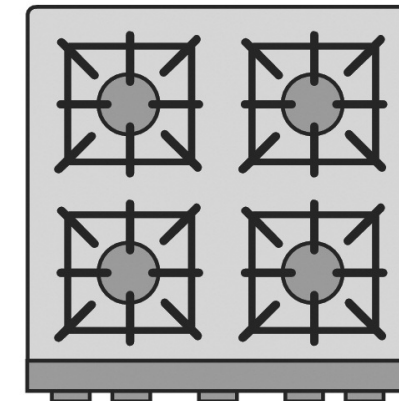
- Ladle soup into bowls and top with parmesan cheese. Serve with crusty bread.

**ENJOY!**

## Drip Pan Do's and Don'ts

Drip pans are the chrome, shallow bowls that fit right underneath your electric range's surface elements. Not only do they add a sharp appearance to your range, but drip pans are more than just looks; they catch drippings that otherwise could trickle down into the electrical components of your stove top, and also aid in reflecting heat back to their surface elements, aiding in efficiency. In order to remain efficient and safe they should be cleaned or replaced regularly when there is a build up of debris and grease. There is a common practice to avoid this necessary clean up, lining the drip pan with tin foil. **THIS IS NOT SAFE!**

This practice can cause overheating, and potentially catch the aluminum foil on fire. In addition, this alternative also may result in the risk of electric shock, cause short circuits, fire, damage of electrical components, and put you at the risk of injury. Though a minor result compared to the prior hazards listed, lining your drip pans in aluminum foil also increased the chance of the chrome bowl rusting. Needless to say, it is an inexpensive and worthwhile endeavor to replace or just simply clean your drip pans rather than run the risk of damaging your range, or exposing yourself to safety risks.



Like many kitchen pieces, a good scrub with warm water and dish soap will get a drip pan clean. Simply lift the surface elements and put them aside (only when their cool of course!). Lift out the drip pans and first give them a good shake into a garbage bag or other liner to get rid of any loose gunk. Then rinse or spray with warm water to loosen the remaining mess. Now it's time to scrub the pans with soap. If this doesn't appeal to you, mixing dish soap with a little baking soda to create a paste and leaving it to soak on the pans in plastic bags for about an hour will make it easier.

And just like that you've got clean, safe, and efficient drip pans again!

## Winter Reminders

**Keep The Outdoors Outside** – From now until spring all windows should be closed while the heat is turned on. One of the ways we keep costs affordable and still provide top quality housing is to make sure that all residences are properly insulated so that the heat stays in and the cold stays out.

**Safely Store Your Things** – Any toys or outdoor furniture should be brought inside during the winter. This is so any personal possessions don't accidentally find themselves on the underside of a busy snowplow and get damaged.

**Work With the Snow Plow** – It won't be long before we see the magical "white" carpet outside!! Remember to move your vehicles, either when the plow is on site or after they've cleared a spot where you can move your vehicle to while they plow the parking lot. Please be accommodating to the snow plow guys – it's easier than shoveling out your vehicle yourself!

**Don't Break the Thermostat!** – The thermostats are designed to be turned up to a maximum of 70 degrees. This is to help us keep costs low so you can enjoy a great apartment at a fair price. Please do not attempt to tamper with the thermostat so it will go over 70 degrees as this can result in unnecessary maintenance, and the unnecessary maintenance cost that comes with that.

