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NEWS

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Colorado State Forest Service Provides Christmas Trees for State Capitol, CSU

FORT COLLINS, Colo. – Starting this week, fresh-cut Christmas trees provided by the Fort Collins District of the Colorado State Forest Service go on display at the State Capitol, Colorado State University President's Office and other CSU offices.

The subalpine fir trees were harvested in late November at approximately 8,500 feet in northern Larimer County on State Trust Land. CSFS foresters selectively cut trees on the property to improve forest health.

At a ceremony today, Gov. Hickenlooper will light the 26-foot tree at the State Capitol. Themed the "Gold Star Tree of Honor," the tree pays tribute to Colorado military members lost in the line of duty since Sept. 11, 2001, as well as their families. Colorado National Guard soldiers and their families are decorating the tree, and the boughs trimmed off the tree are being shipped to National Guard personnel deployed throughout the world.

Mike Hughes, assistant district forester with the CSFS Fort Collins District, ensures that CSFS Christmas trees are treated to reduce fire risk. After the trees are cut, he soaks each tree base in a solution that encourages water absorption. Hughes says the most important safety measure for any Christmas tree is making sure its stand is always filled with water, because a well-watered tree is much less likely to cause a fire in the home.

The CSFS recommends the following Christmas tree safety tips, which apply to locally cut trees and those from a nearby tree lot:

- **Select a fresh tree.** Make sure needles do not drop off readily when you run your hands over them or shake the tree trunk.
- **Saw the base.** A few hours after being cut, trees start to dry out at the base. To improve water absorption, saw a 1-inch cookie off the tree base before submerging it in water.
- **Avoid heat.** Christmas trees should not be located near fireplaces, heat sources or areas with extended direct sunlight.
- **Water often.** Make sure the waterline never drops below the base. During the first few days at home, this probably means adding water twice daily.
- **Minimize ignition risks.** Keep open flames away from trees, and don't overload nearby circuits by plugging too many lights into a wall socket.
- **Monitor the tree.** If a Christmas tree dries out faster than expected, remove it from the home.

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POSSIBLE SIDEBAR

Christmas Tree Solution:

The CSFS recommends the following tree-watering solution to increase absorption:

- 2 gallons hot water
- 2 cups corn syrup
- 2 ounces liquid bleach
- 2 pinches Epsom salts
- ½ teaspoon borax
- 1 teaspoon chelated iron (available at garden shops)

Mix well, then cool before filling the base. Keep extra solution on hand and refill the tree stand regularly.

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