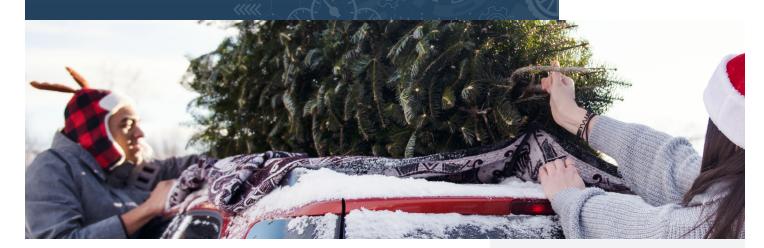FACT SHEET
SAFELY TRANSPORTING A REAL CHRISTMAS TREE

Key Data Points

Consumer Behavior
- An estimated 84 million (33%) Americans plan to purchase a live Christmas tree this year
  - Millennials (45%) are more likely to purchase a live Christmas tree than Generation X (32%) and Baby Boomers (21%)

- Among those planning to purchase a live Christmas tree this year:
  - 44% will transport the tree using unsafe methods
    - » 20% will tie the tree to the roof of their vehicle without using a roof rack
    - » 24% plan to place the tree in the bed of their pickup truck unsecured
  - 16% say that they have previously had a Christmas tree fall off or out of their vehicle when transporting it home

Road Debris-Related Crashes
- Between 2011 – 2014:
  - More than 200,000 crashes involved debris on U.S. roadways
  - Debris-related crashes have resulted in approximately 39,000 injuries and more than 500 deaths

- Since 2001, crashes involving vehicle-related road debris increased 40%

- One-in-three crashes involving debris occurs between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. (daylight hours when people are most likely to be shopping for a real Christmas tree)

Potential Vehicle Damage
- An improperly secured real Christmas trees can cost drivers as much as $1,500 in repairs

Penalties and Fines
- All 50 states have laws that make it illegal for items to fall from a vehicle while on the road. State penalties can result in hefty fines, some as much at $5,000, with some states listing jail as a possible punishment for offenders.

Background

According to AAA, an estimated 84 million Americans plan to purchase a real Christmas tree. Whether purchased at a local tree lot, fresh cut farm or retail store, each one must be transported from where it is sold to its final destination. A tree that isn't properly secured can become a dangerous projectile, endangering others on the road.

AAA Recommendations:

Transporting a real Christmas tree is easy as long as you have the right tools and follow these simple tips:

- Make sure to bring strong rope or nylon ratchet straps, an old blanket, gloves and of course – the right vehicle. One with a roof rack is ideal but a pickup truck, SUV, van or minivan can work just as well.

- Have the lot wrap the tree in netting before loading it. Loose branches can also be secured with rope or twine to help protect the tree from damage.

- Cover the roof with an old blanket to protect the car from any damage.

- Place the tree on the roof rack or in the bed of the truck with the trunk facing the front of the car. If the vehicle does not have a roof rack and is large enough – place the tree inside.

- Secure the tree at its bottom, center and top using strong rope or nylon ratchet straps. Avoid using the twine offered by many tree lots. Use fixed vehicle tie-down points and loop the rope or strap around the tree trunk above a branch to prevent any side-to-side or front-to-rear movement.

- Once tied down, give the tree several strong tugs from various angles to make sure it is secured in place and will not come loose.

- Drive slowly and take back roads if possible. Higher speeds can create significant airflow that can damage your tree or challenge even the best tie-down methods.

Methodology

An online omnibus survey was conducted November 7-10, 2019. A total of 1,004 interviews were completed among a demographically representative sample of U.S. adults 18 years of age and older. Completed interviews are weighted by five variables: age, gender, geographic region, race and education, to ensure reliable and accurate representation of the total U.S. population, 18 years of age and older.

A probability sample of 1,004 U.S. adults would have an overall margin of error of 3% at the 95% confidence level. However, this study did not use a probability sample; respondents were selected from among those who have volunteered to participate in online surveys and polls. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to multiple sources of error, including, but not limited to sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments.