



# SAFETY FLASH



## Christmas Decoration Safety Tips

Christmas is a special time for celebration and should not end in tragedy because of hazards that are present at this time of year. When decorating at Christmas there are many ways to illuminate your home, but there are many things you should consider before you begin the process of "lighting" the night. Christmas decorations like candles, lights and trees are important parts of the season and the final outcome is a joyous occasion with family and friends. However, precautions must be taken as these decorations have the potential to create fires, injuries and death. Below are a few safety precautions to follow during the holiday season.

**CHRISTMAS TREE:** When purchasing an artificial tree, look for the label "Fire Resistant." Although this label does not mean the tree won't catch fire, it does indicate the tree will resist burning and should extinguish quickly.



When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness. A fresh tree is green, needles are hard to pull from branches and do not break when bent between your fingers. The trunk's stump of a fresh tree is sticky with resin, and when tapped on the ground, the tree should lose few needles.

Tree placement is important; place the tree away from fireplaces, candles, and radiators. Heated rooms cause live trees to dry rapidly, so be certain to keep the tree stand filled with water. Place the tree out of the way of hallways and do not block doorways.

**LIGHTS:** Interior or exterior, use only lights that have been designed and tested for their intended use and safety by a recognized testing laboratory, which indicates conformance with all safety standards. Use lights that have fused plugs only.

Check each set of lights, new or old, for; broken or cracked sockets; frayed or exposed wires; loose connections, and dispose of damaged light sets. Always replace burned-out bulbs promptly with the same wattage bulbs.

Use no more than three standard-size sets of lights per single extension cord. Be certain the extension cord is rated for the intended use.

Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights and any person touching a tree branch may receive a shock or electrocution.

Before using exterior lights, check labels to be certain they have been certified for outdoor use.

### Use Electricity Properly

Do not overload the outlets by plugging too many electrical cords into one outlet or by plugging too many extension cords together (e.g. stringing too many holiday lights together).

Electrical outlets and extension cords can overheat and potentially start a fire. Remember too that by-passing grounded electrical cords (3-prong) can increase the shock hazard. To delay the tree drying out, cut a small portion off the trunk, and place in water. Keep the tree supplied with fresh water until you take it down after the holidays.



Fasten exterior lights securely to trees, house walls, or other firm supports to protect the lights from wind damage. Use insulated staples only to retain strings of lights in place. Never use nails or tacks. Route strings of lights through hooks (available at hardware stores).

Turn off all holiday lights when retire for the evening or depart your home. Lights left unattended may create electrical shorts and start a fire.

Use caution when removing exterior holiday lights. Never pull or tug on lights - they could unravel and inadvertently wrap around power lines.

Exterior lights and decorations should be plugged into circuits protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). Portable exterior GFCIs may be purchased where electrical supplies are purchased. GFCIs can be permanently installed to household circuits by a qualified electrician.

**DECORATIONS:** When you decorate for the holidays, you should check all lights. It is common for lights and the cords to deteriorate over the years. Lights may last for years, but become deteriorated over the span of time. If the cord or cords has/have deteriorated, this may cause a hazard. Always check the light wires for re-use to prevent a fire hazard.

Only use non-combustible or flame-resistant materials to trim a tree. Choose tinsel or artificial icicles of plastic or non-leaded metals. Leaded materials are hazardous if ingested by children.

Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens. Always use non-flammable holders, and place candles where they will not be knocked over.

With small children, take special care to avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable. Keep trimmings with small removable parts out of the reach of children, this prevents a child from swallowing or inhaling small pieces. Avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food that may tempt a child to consume them.

Wear gloves to avoid eye and skin irritation while decorating with spun glass "angel hair."

Follow container directions carefully to avoid lung irritation while decorating with artificial snow sprays.

### Candle Care

**Avoid Using Lit Candles.** If you do use them, make sure they are in stable holders and place them where they cannot be easily knocked over. Never leave the house with candles burning.

**Never Put Lit Candles on a Tree, near curtain or sofa.** Do not go near a Christmas tree with an open flame - candles, lighters or matches.



**There are many things to think about when you decorate during the Christmas Holiday. Everyone loves bright lights and some believe the brighter the better. Practice these safety tips so you have a wonderful and safe holiday.**

**In the event of fire or emergency please call 995.**