

As the holidays approach, it is important to look for and eliminate potential dangers from holiday lights, trees, candles, and decorations that could lead to fires and injuries. Follow these tips to help make your holiday a safe one.

Holiday Safety

LIGHTS

- Use only lights tested for safety by a recognized testing laboratory, which indicates conformance with safety standards.
- Check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, loose connections, and throw out damaged sets.
- Use no more than three standard-size sets of lights per single extension cord.
- Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights, and a person touching a branch could be electrocuted.
- Check labels on outdoor lights to be sure they have been certified for outdoor use.
- Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, house walls, or other firm supports to protect them from wind damage. Use only insulated staples to hold strings in place, not nails or tacks. You can also run strings of lights through hooks (available at hardware stores).
- Use timers to set holiday lights to turn off at times when you are typically not home and when you go to bed. This will conserve energy and could help to prevent a fire due to shorted-out lights.
- For added electric shock protection, plug outdoor electric lights and decorations into circuits protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). Portable outdoor GFCIs can be purchased where electrical supplies are sold. GFCIs can be installed permanently to household circuits by a qualified and licensed electrician. *Remember to get a certificate of insurance for all contracted work.

CANDLES

Candle lighting ceremonies during Advent, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa are beautiful traditions. However, keep matches, lighters, and candles away from children. Never leave burning candles unattended. These safety tips will help prevent many of the 11,000+ candle-related fires that occur each year. Stay safe this holiday season; it is the best gift you can give.

TREES

- Look for a "Fire Resistant" label on artificial trees. Although this does not mean the tree won't catch fire, it indicates the tree will resist burning and should extinguish quickly.
- Check for freshness of live trees. A fresh tree is green, needles are hard to pull from branches and when bent between fingers, do not break. A fresh tree trunk should be sticky with resin, and when tapped on the ground, the tree should not lose many needles. Add water every 1-2 days.
- Live trees should be kept in a garage or other cool place until decorating.
- Place trees away from fireplaces and radiators. Heated rooms quickly dry out live trees, so be sure to keep stand filled with water. Place trees out of the way of traffic and do not block doorways.

DECORATIONS

- 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 down.
- In homes with small children, avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable. Keep trimmings with small removable parts out of reach from children to avoid swallowing or inhaling all pieces. Avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food that may tempt a child to eat them.
- Wear gloves to avoid skin irritation while decorating with spun glass "angel hair." Follow container directions carefully to avoid lung irritation while decorating with artificial snow sprays.

DID YOU KNOW?

Each year, hospital emergency rooms treat approximately 12,500 people for injuries related to holiday lights, decorations, and Christmas trees.

Christmas trees are involved in about 300 fires annually, resulting in 10 deaths, 30 injuries, and average more than \$10 million in property loss and damage.

Since CPSC began monitoring the sale of holiday lights, 116,500 units of holiday lights were found to be unsafe.

Figures provided by US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC)