



## Holiday Decorating Safety Tips

Follow basic safety guidelines to help prevent serious electrical and fire hazards as you decorate your home and yard this season.

### Candles

- Avoid using candles when possible. Consider using battery-operated candles in place of traditional candles.
- Never leave an open flame unattended. Keep burning candles within sight.
- Extinguish all candles before you go to bed, leave the room or leave the house.
- Place lighted candles away from combustible material and areas where they might be knocked over.
- Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens. Keep candles away from other decorations and wrapping paper.

### Christmas Trees

- When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness to minimize the fire hazard of dry needles. A fresh tree will stay green longer and be less of a fire hazard than a dry tree.
- Because heated rooms dry out live trees rapidly, be sure to keep the stand filled with water.
- When purchasing an artificial tree, look for the label "Fire Resistant." This label indicates that the tree is more resistant to burning.
- Don't use electrical ornaments or light strings on artificial trees with metallic leaves or branch coverings.
- Place your tree at least 3 feet away from all heat sources, including fireplaces and radiators.
- When trimming a tree, only use non-combustible or flame-resistant materials.

### Electric Lights and Decorations

- Before decorating, determine how many outlets are available and where they are located.
- Avoid overloading electrical outlets, which can overheat and cause a fire.
- Carefully inspect each electrical decoration. Cracked or frayed sockets, loose or bare wires, and loose connections may cause a serious shock or start a fire.
- Use lights approved for safe use by a nationally recognized testing laboratory.
- Follow the use and care instructions that accompany electrical decorations.
- Always unplug electrical decorations before replacing bulbs or fuses.
- Do not mount or support light strings in a way that might damage the cord's insulation.
- Never connect more than three strands of incandescent lights together.
- Turn off all indoor and outdoor electrical decorations before leaving home or going to bed.



## Outdoor Decorating

- Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, house walls, or other firm supports to protect the lights from wind damage. Use insulated staples, or run the lights through hooks.
- Make sure all products are marked for outdoor use.
- Keep all outdoor extension cords and light strings clear of snow and standing water.
- Make sure spotlights used to highlight decorations are well-ventilated, protected from weather, and a safe distance from flammable items.

## Ladders

- Inspect ladders for loose or missing screws, hinges, bolts, and nuts.
- Exercise caution when decorating near power lines. Contact with a high-voltage line could lead to electrocution. Keep equipment and yourself at least 10 feet from lines.
- Use wooden or fiberglass ladders when hanging lights outdoors. Metal ladders conduct electricity.

## GFCIs

- Plug outdoor electric lights and decorations into circuits protected by ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) to prevent electric shock.
- GFCIs should be used in any indoor or outdoor area where water may come into contact with electrical products, including kitchens, bathrooms, garages, and outdoors.
- Portable GFCIs provide flexibility in using receptacles that are not GFCI-protected, and are often used outdoors.
- GFCIs should be tested once a month to confirm that they are working properly.
- Portable GFCIs should be tested before every use. Simply press the RESET button.

## Child Safety

- Keep young children away from holiday lights, electrical decorations and extension cords to prevent electrical shock and burn injuries.
- Keep candles, matches and lighters out of children's reach.
- Cover any unused outlets on extension cords with electrical tape or with plastic caps to prevent the chance of a child making contact with the live circuit.

## Post-Holiday Safety

- Holiday decorations are meant for temporary use. Take down all decorations during the first week of January.
- Do not yank or tug on cords when unplugging them.
- Carefully inspect all decorations prior to storing them. Discard broken or faulty lights.
- Make sure that electrical cords are in good condition, and wire insulation is not frayed or cracked.
- Store decorations in a dry location that is safely out of reach of children and pets.

Visit [www.holidaysafety.org](http://www.holidaysafety.org) for more tips and tools to help keep you safe this season.