



Make Safety a Tradition Campaign



Holiday Safety Community Toolkit

**Electrical Safety Foundation International
Winter 2010**



Introduction

The winter holiday season is traditionally a festive and eventful time of year. Celebrations, family gatherings and visits from houseguests traditionally increase in number during the season.

Statistics show that the incidents of home fires and electrical accidents also typically increase during the winter holiday season.

Preparing for the arrival of guests in the midst of the hectic holiday season can be challenging. While festive decorations and savory food may seem like the most important aspects of holiday entertaining, remember not to overlook the safety of your guests.

Each year, the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) launches a holiday safety awareness campaign to encourage families and communities across the country to *Make Safety a Tradition* of the holiday season.

This year's campaign highlights the safety concerns associated with holiday entertaining, providing consumers with a variety of resources to help them become safety-conscious hosts and houseguests this season.

As a part of our holiday awareness program, ESFI has prepared a Holiday Safety Community Toolkit that provides instructions, tools, information and resources that can be used to help increase awareness about the importance of home and electrical safety in your community this holiday season.

In addition, ESFI's seasonal holiday website features tips, facts, statistics, trends, and safety reminders to help keep families and communities safe this season.

How to Use this Toolkit

Advanced planning and a proactive approach to safety are essential to keeping family, friends and guests safe during all of their holiday activities.

In this kit, you will find a collection of new and updated safety materials that provide lifesaving information specific to the winter holiday season.

The kit is organized into sections that each focus on a key issue addressed as part of ESFI's 2010 *Make Safety a Tradition* holiday campaign: entertaining safety, decorating, child safety, and home fires.

The materials in each section provide an introduction to the hazard, highlight relevant statistics, and outline basic safety tips. Copy-ready press releases and templates are also included.

Please make use of these complimentary safety awareness resources, inserting the names of your company or organization and spokesperson into the title and/or quotes.

The information in this toolkit can be used in conjunction with the additional print, online, video and multimedia resources featured on ESFI's seasonal website, www.holidaysafety.org.



Holiday Entertaining



Holiday Entertaining

The winter holiday season is traditionally a time of year for merry gatherings of family and friends. Unfortunately, statistics indicate that incidents of home fires and electrical accidents typically increase during the winter months.

Preparing for the arrival of guests in the midst of the hectic holiday season can be challenging. While festive decorations and savory food may seem like the most important aspects of holiday entertaining, remember not to overlook the safety of your guests.

A proactive approach to safety will help you give the gift of safety to your family and friends this holiday season.

Trends and Data

- The number of children injured or killed in home fires more than doubles during the winter months.
- Christmas, Christmas Eve, and New Year's Day are the top 3 days of the year for candle fires.
- Falls associated with holiday decorations send approximately 5,800 people to hospital emergency rooms each year.
- Each year, 3,300 residential fires originate from extension cords, killing and injuring over 300 people.
- Nearly 2,000 extension cord injuries treated in hospital emergency rooms involve fractures or sprains from people tripping over cords.

According to a recent ESFI consumer survey:

- Nearly 60 percent of Americans plan to host guests in their homes during the holiday season.
- More than 60 percent of these holiday visitors will bring children under the age of 18.
- Half of all holiday guests will stay overnight.
- Less than 1/3 of hosts are likely to share their fire escape plan with overnight guests.



Holiday Entertaining Safety Checklist

Use the tips on this checklist to ensure that your home is ready for all of the festive activities the holiday season brings.

Fire Safety

- Test your smoke alarms monthly and make sure that your house is protected by an adequate number of working alarms.
- Smoke alarms should be located inside each bedroom, outside each sleeping area, and on every level of your home.
- Share your fire escape plan, including the location of your outside meeting place, with your overnight guests. Everyone should know at least two ways out of each room in your home.
- Keep halls, stairs, and doorways properly illuminated and free of clutter and other objects that could hinder an escape during a fire emergency.
- Check to make sure your stairs, halls and entries are properly illuminated. Use nightlights in hallways and bathrooms.
- Consider having older guests or those with mobility issues sleep on the ground floor of the house.

Decorating Safety

- Avoid overloading electrical outlets, which can overheat and cause a fire.
- Do not place extension cords where they could cause a tripping hazard, like doorways.
- Do not run extension cords under rugs or furniture.
- Keep all decorations 3 feet away from heating sources, including space heaters and fireplaces.
- Keep young visitors in mind. Place breakables, candles and other potentially dangerous items out of their reach.
- Turn off and unplug all decorations before leaving home or going to sleep.
- Use only weatherproof electrical devices for outside activities. Protect outdoor electrical devices from moisture.

Heating Equipment Safety

- Have your heating system inspected annually by a licensed, qualified professional.
- Use space heaters properly and safely. Keep them out of high-traffic and exit areas, and at least 3 feet from anything that can burn.
- Do not leave a space heater running unattended. Turn space heaters off and unplug them when you leave the room or go to sleep.
- Never leave an open flame, including the fireplace, unattended.



Child Safety

- Put small items that could pose a choking hazard - like buttons, coins and jewelry – away if you if are hosting young children.
- Use safety gates at the top and bottom of stairways to keep babies and toddlers safe.
- Move all cleaning products and other dangerous items out of reach of children and store them in a locked area.
- Consider turning your water heater temperature down to 120 degrees Fahrenheit to reduce the risk of scalding.
- In homes with young children, install tamper resistant receptacles to prevent electrical shocks and burns, or use safety covers on all unused outlets that are accessible to children.
- Never allow children to play with electrical decorations or cords.

Electrical Safety

- Test ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI) and arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCI) to ensure that they are working properly.
- Consider adding new safety technology like tamper resistant receptacles (TRR) or arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCI) if you are having any electrical system maintenance or upgrades performed.
- Outdoor outlets should be protected with GFCI technology to reduce the risk of electric shock.
- Avoid overloading electrical outlets. Check outlets regularly for problems, including overheating, loose connections, reversed polarity, and corrosion.

Cooking Safety

- Never leave cooking equipment unattended.
- Keep children at least 3 feet away from cooking appliances.
- Keep towels, pot holders and curtains away from hot surfaces.
- Wear short or close-fitting sleeves. Loose clothing can catch fire.

Visit www.holidaysafety.org for more tips and tools to help keep you safe this season.



Child Safety



Child Safety

The winter holiday season is a magical time for children. It is only natural for them to be drawn into the excitement created by the colorful lights, flickering candles, and shiny ornaments that decorate homes and stores throughout the season.

It is up to adults to plan ahead to ensure that childhood curiosity does not result in dangerous consequences. Keep child safety in mind as you prepare your home for the holidays.

Additional planning may be necessary if you plan to host young guests and do not currently have childproofing measures in place.

Trends and Data

- According to the CPSC, 70 percent of child-related electrical accidents occur at home, when adult supervision is present.
- 13 percent of extension cord injuries every year involve children under five years of age.
- Each day, nearly 7 children are treated in hospital emergency rooms for electrical injuries caused by tampering with a wall outlet.
- Children under age 5 are almost 1-1/2 times as likely to die in a home fire as the average person.

According to a recent ESFI consumer survey:

- More than 60 percent of holiday guests will bring children under the age of 18.
- Less than half of families have explained their family fire escape plan to their babysitter.



Child Safety Tips

Many homes and families will host children over the holidays, including grandchildren, friends and neighbors. Keep child safety in mind as you prepare your home for the holidays.

Home Safety

- In homes with young children, install tamper resistant receptacles to prevent electrical shocks and burns or use safety covers on all unused outlets that are accessible to children.
- Place safety gates and the tops and bottoms of stairways.
- Move all cleaning products and other dangerous items out of reach of children and store them in a locked area
- Consider turning your water heater temperature down to 120 degrees Fahrenheit to reduce the risk of scalding.
- Put small items that could pose a choking hazard - like buttons, coins and jewelry – away if you if are hosting young children.
- Do not use space heaters in rooms where children are unsupervised.
- Read all toy labels and instructions before letting children play with them. Check to make sure the child meets the age requirements specified on the label.

Decorating Safety

- Avoid putting Christmas tree lights, ornaments, metal hooks, and other small, “mouth sized” decorations near the ground or on the lower limbs of a tree where they may easily be reached by young children or pets.
- Never allow children or pets to play with electrical decorations.
- Keep matches, lighters, and candles out of the reach of children.
- In homes 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. Pieces could be swallowed or inhaled.
- 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.
- Place electrical cords out of the reach of small children.

Cooking Safety

- If you are cooking on the stove or in the microwave, do not hold your child as you remove items from these appliances.
- Keep children at least 3 feet away from cooking appliances.
- Never leave a child unsupervised when an electric or gas stove is within reach.



Tamper Resistant Receptacles

Every year in the United States, more than 2,400 children under ten years old are treated in hospital emergency rooms for electrical shock or burns caused by tampering with a wall outlet around the home – that is seven children a day. Nearly one-third of these injuries occur when a small child attempts to insert household objects such as hairpins, keys, or paperclips into the receptacle.

New tamper resistant receptacle (TRR) technology provides a simple, permanent solution to help prevent these types of childhood shock and burn injuries.

TRRs may appear identical to standard wall outlets, but they are actually designed with spring-loaded receptacle cover plates that close off the receptacle openings, or slots.

When equal pressure is simultaneously applied to both sides, the receptacle cover plates open, allowing a standard plug to make contact with the receptacle contact points.

Without this simultaneous pressure, the cover plates remain closed to prevent children from inserting objects into receptacles in and around the home.

Tamper resistant receptacles have been required in hospital pediatric care facilities for more than 20 years. In fact, they have proven to be so effective that the 2008 National Electrical Code (NEC) now requires installation of TRRs in all new homes.

The cost of installing a TRR in a newly constructed home is about \$0.50 more than a traditional receptacle. In existing homes, standard receptacles can be replaced with TRRs for as little as two dollars per outlet.

TRRs should be installed by a licensed, qualified electrician, using the same installation guidelines that apply to standard receptacles.



Holiday Decorating



Holiday Decorating

Very few things are as unique to the winter holiday season as the custom of decorating your home and yard. Findings from a new ESFI consumer survey indicate that more than 80 percent of Americans will decorate their homes this year as part of their winter holiday celebrations.

More than 70 percent of those who plan to decorate their homes for the holiday will use at least one extension cord.

While decorative lights and other electrical decorations contribute to the splendor of the season, they can significantly increase the risk of fires and electrical injuries if not used safely.

Trends and Data

- Candles cause more than 15,000 home fires every year, resulting in more than 13,000 injuries and deaths.
- On average, 250 fires each year begin with a Christmas tree. An additional 170 fires each year begin with holiday and decorative lights.
- An estimated 5,800 people each year are treated in hospital emergency rooms for falls associated with holiday decorations.
- More than half of these injuries are caused by falling from a ladder or roof while decorating outdoors.



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 for more tips and tools to help keep you safe this season.



Extension Cord Safety Tips

Proper selection, use, and maintenance of extension cords is critical to avoiding injuries and fires. Following a few simple safety guidelines can prevent potentially dangerous mistakes with extension cords this holiday season:

Safety Tips

- Extension cords are meant to provide a temporary solution and should not be used as a long-term or permanent electrical circuit.
- Purchase cords from authorized retailers and check to see that they have been approved by a nationally recognized testing laboratory.
- Select a cord that is long enough to meet your needs. Never attempt to extend the length of an extension cord by connecting it with another extension cord.
- Never use a cord that feels hot or is damaged in any way. Touching even a single exposed strand can result in an electric shock or burn.
- Make sure the extension cord you use is rated for the products to be plugged in and is marked for either indoor or outdoor use.
- Examine extension cords before each use. Cracked, frayed, or otherwise damaged cords should be replaced immediately.
- Unplug and safely store after every use. Store cords indoors to keep them protected from damage caused by water and excessive heat.
- Do not place extension cords in high traffic areas, under carpets or across walkways where they pose a potential tripping hazard.
- Do not allow extension cords to dangle from counters or tables, where someone could accidentally pull them down or trip over them.
- Do not run extension cords through walls, or across doorways, ceilings or floors. This may cause the cord to overheat, creating a serious fire hazard.
- Cover unused outlets on the extension cord to prevent children from making contact with a live circuit.

Outdoor Safety Tips

- When working outdoors, use only weather-resistant, heavy gauge extension cords marked “for outdoor use.” These cords have added safeguards designed to withstand the outdoor environment.
- Keep all outdoor extension cords and light strands clear of snow and standing water, and well-protected from the elements.
- When using electricity outdoors, always plug extension cords into GFCI-protected outlets.

Visit www.holidaysafety.org for more tips and tools to help keep you safe this season.



Home Fires



Home Fires

The winter holiday season is traditionally a festive and eventful time of year. Celebrations, family gatherings and visits from houseguests traditionally increase in number during the season.

Unfortunately, statistics show that home fires and electrical accidents also increase during these same months. There are steps that can be taken to reduce the risks of death and injury from a home fire. It is critical that families keep fire safety in mind while enjoying this festive, exciting and extremely busy time of year.

Trends and Data

- Half of all home heating fires occur in December, January and February.
- Space heaters are the cause of more than 21,000 home fires every year.
- Home fires involving cooking peak on dates that are major U.S. holidays with traditions of cooking, such as Thanksgiving and Christmas.
- Almost two-thirds of home fire deaths resulted from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms.
- According to NFPA, 30 percent of all home fires, and 38 percent of home fire deaths, occur during the winter months.
- According to a recent ESFI consumer survey, 54 percent of people use space heaters to supplement their homes' central heating installed in their bedrooms.



Space Heater Safety Tips

Each winter, heating is a leading cause of residential structure fires. As the temperature drops during the winter holiday season, many families turn to alternative heat sources, such as space heaters, to help warm their homes.

The risk of fire from space heaters is 3 to 4 times higher than from central heating equipment. Take extra precautions to ensure the proper use of portable space heaters during winter months.

Safety Tips

- Choose a heater that bears the mark of a nationally recognized testing laboratory.
- Check the cord before plugging in the heater. If frayed, worn or damaged, do not use the heater.
- Do not use space heaters with extension cords. Plug them directly into an outlet on an unburdened circuit.
- Keep space heaters at least 3 feet away from anything that can burn, such as bedding, curtains, furniture, clothing, and paper.
- Place space heaters on level, flat surfaces. Never place heaters on cabinets, tables, or furniture.
- Do not use a space heater in damp or wet areas unless it is specifically designed for use outdoors or in bathrooms.
- Keep space heaters out of high-traffic and exit areas.
- Do not use space heaters to warm bedding, cook food, dry clothing or thaw pipes.
- Never leave a space heater unattended. Turn heaters off when you go to sleep or leave the room.
- Turn off, unplug, and safely store portable space heaters when not in use.
- Do not use space heaters in rooms where children are unsupervised.

Visit www.holidaysafety.org for more tips and tools to help keep you safe this season.



Cooking Safety Tips

Unattended cooking is the leading cause of home fires in the United States. When cooking for holiday visitors, remember to keep an eye on what you are doing.

Safety Tips

- Stay in the kitchen when food is cooking. Turn off burners if you have to leave the room.
- Keep towels, pot holders and curtains away from hot surfaces.
- Wear short or close-fitting sleeves. Loose clothing can catch fire.
- Move appliance cords away from hot surfaces where they can melt or burn from excess heat. Pay particular attention to cords around toasters, ovens, and ranges.
- Use ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI) protection anywhere that water may come into contact with electricity, such as kitchen countertops.
- Keep appliances away from the sink and other sources of water.

Cooking with Children

Holiday cooking and baking can be a fun activity for the whole family, as long as you remember to follow a few simple steps to ensure the safety of the littlest holiday chefs:

- Watch children closely in the kitchen.
- Keep children at least 3 feet away from cooking appliances.
- Never leave a child unsupervised while cooking or when an electric or gas stove is within reach.
- Turn pot handles toward the back of the stove so that children cannot pull them down. Use the back burners on the cooktop when possible.
- If you are cooking on the stove or in the microwave, do not hold your child as you remove items from these appliances.



Smoke Alarm Safety Tips

Smoke alarms save lives. Testing smoke alarms should be an important part of your holiday preparations. Protect your family, guests, and home with properly installed and maintained smoke alarms.

Installation Tips

- Smoke alarms should be installed in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area, and on every level of the home.
- For the best protection, smoke alarms should be interconnected, so that they all sound if one sounds.
- Purchase smoke alarms from a reputable retailer that you trust.
- Choose alarms that bear the label of a nationally recognized testing laboratory.
- Install smoke alarms at least 10 feet from cooking appliances to reduce the possibility of nuisance alarms.
- If possible, alarms should be mounted in the center of a ceiling.
- If mounted on a wall, they should be located 6 to 12 inches below the ceiling.
- Avoid locating alarms near bathrooms, heating appliances, windows or ceiling fans.

Maintenance Tips

- Smoke alarms should be tested once a month by pressing the TEST button.
- Smoke alarm batteries should be replaced in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, at least once a year.
- If an alarm "chirps" or "beeps" to indicate low batteries, they should be replaced immediately.
- Smoke alarms should be replaced in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, at least every ten years.
- Make sure everyone in your family knows the sound of the smoke alarm and what it means.

Visit www.holidaysafety.org for more tips and tools to help keep you safe this season.



Arc Fault Circuit Interrupters

Over the last thirty years, our homes have been dramatically transformed by electrical devices. However, many homes are overburdened by today's electrical demands, putting them at greater risk of arc faults and arc induced fires.

An arc fault is a dangerous electrical problem caused by damaged, overheated, or stressed electrical wiring or devices.

In the United States, home electrical problems cause more than 53,800 fires each year, resulting in more than 450 deaths, 1,400 injuries and more than \$1.4 billion in property damage. Arcing faults are one of the major causes of these fires.

The solution to this problem is an advanced electrical safety device known as an arc fault circuit interrupter, or AFCI.

Arc fault circuit interrupters, or AFCIs, are devices that replace standard circuit breakers in your home's electrical service panel.

AFCIs provide a higher level of electrical fire protection, detecting hazardous arcing conditions traditional breakers were not designed to recognize, and shutting down the electricity before a fire can start.

The CPSC estimates that AFCIs could prevent more than 50 percent of the electrical fires that occur every year.

While AFCIs were previously only required to protect bedroom circuits, the 2008 National Electrical Code now requires this technology to be installed in additional areas of newly-constructed homes, including dining rooms and living rooms.

Though the new safety requirements are limited to new home construction, older homes with aging wiring systems can benefit from the added protection of AFCIs.

Depending on the size of a given home, the cost impact for installing AFCI protection is \$140 - \$350.

Installation and Maintenance Tips

- Combination-type AFCIs should only be installed by a qualified, licensed electrician.
- Test AFCIs once a month to make sure they are in proper working condition.
- To test: Push the test button. The breaker handle should go to the middle or OFF position. To reset: Move the breaker handle to the OFF position and then to the ON position.
- A defective AFCI circuit breaker should always be replaced by a professional.

Visit www.holidaysafety.org for more tips and tools to help keep you safe this season.