



HOLIDAY DECORATING SAFETY

Exercise Caution Indoors and Outdoors

The holidays are a joyous time of year, with decorations ranging from simple strands of lights to elaborate outdoor displays. Whether entertaining guests, decorating the home, or shopping for gifts, it is easy to get caught up in the holiday season.

During this time, people are often at increased risk of becoming the victim of a fire or electrical accident, including shock, burn, and electrocution.

However, many of these injuries can be prevented by following important safety tips this holiday season.

Safety Tips

- 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.
- Always unplug electrical decorations before replacing bulbs or fuses.
- Follow the use and care instructions that accompany electrical decorations.
- Never nail or staple light strings or extension cords.
- Do not mount or support light strings in a way that might damage the cord's insulation.
- When hanging decorations, do not connect more than three light strings together.
- Turn off all indoor and outdoor electrical decorations before leaving home or going to bed.

- To reduce the chance of electrical shock, use a dry, wooden ladder when hanging lights.
- Use caution when decorating near power lines. Contact with a high-voltage line could lead to electrocution.
- Plug outdoor electric lights and decorations into circuits protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) to prevent electric shock.
- Never use electric lights on a metallic tree, which can become charged with electricity from faulty lights.
- Avoid overloading electrical outlets, which can overheat and start a fire.
- Keep all outdoor extension cords and light strings clear of snow and standing water.
- Use lights that are approved for safe use by a nationally recognized testing laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL).
- Never leave your toaster or stove unattended. Unattended cooking is the leading cause of home fires in the United States.
- Select a fresh Christmas tree and keep it in water at all times. Needles on fresh trees should be green and should not fall off easily.
- Know the location of your fire extinguisher, and how to use it.
- Choose holiday decorations made with flame-resistant, flame-retardant or non-combustible materials.
- Before using any electrical decorations outdoors, make sure the product is approved for outdoor use.
- Never allow children or pets to play with electrical decorations.

Facts & Statistics

- 76 percent of U.S. homeowners decorate their homes during the winter holiday season.
- 70 percent of Americans plan to use electrical lighting and decorations indoors.
- Holiday decorations and Christmas trees account for almost 2,000 fires and more than \$41 million in property damage each year.
- Nearly one-quarter (24%) of Americans have not replaced their smoke detector batteries within the last two years.
- Candles are the source of ignition in 56 percent of home decoration fires.
- More than 20 percent of Americans do not turn off holiday electrical lighting and decorations before going to sleep or leaving the house.
- On December 31 and January 1 alone, there are more than 200 fatalities and injuries caused by home fires.
- 25 percent of all home decoration fires occur in December.