



Holiday Safety

December 2008



Injuries During the Holidays

- Home fires and electrocutions nearly doubles during December.
- Nearly 130,000 home fires in December
- 400 deaths from home fires, 1600 injuries
- Christmas trees alone account for 2,000 fires and cause \$41 million in damage.
- During November and December of each year, about 10,000 people are treated in hospital emergency rooms as a result of falls, cuts, shocks and burns related to holiday decorating.



Electrical Decorations

- Read and follow the manufacturer's instructions
- Inspect each decoration before plugging in, look for cracked, frayed, or bare wires
- Plug outdoor decorations into a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI)
- Avoid plugging in too many holiday lights and other decorations into a single outlet.
- Do not run extension cords under carpets, furniture, or behind baseboards.
- Do not place electrical cords across walkways or other high traffic areas.



Electrical Decorations - 2

- Be careful not to mount or hang light strands in any way that might damage the insulation.
- Use only listed (see slide 11) electrical decorations.
- Never use electrical decorations on a metallic tree.
- Make sure product is labeled “for outdoor use” before using outdoors.
- Do not connect more than the manufacturer-recommended number of strings of lights.
- Turn off all electrical decorations before going to bed. Automatic timers are available for both indoor and outdoor locations.



Christmas Tree Safety

- When selecting a tree, check for freshness to minimize fire hazard of dry needles.
- When it is time to put the tree up, lower the risk of fire by cutting the base of the tree to expose a fresh core so that it can absorb water.
- Remember to fill the tree water daily.
- Be sure that smoke detectors are installed and the batteries fresh.
- Do not have “mouth-size” decorations near the ground or on the lower limbs of Christmas trees when there are small children around.
- When purchasing an artificial tree, look for the label “Fire Resistant”.
- Keep trees away from heat sources, such as fireplaces and radiators.



Fireplace Safety

- Use care with “fire salts”, which produce colored flames when thrown on wood fires. They contain heavy metals that, if eaten, can cause intense gastrointestinal irritation and vomiting. Keep them away from children.
- Do not burn wrapping paper, plastic items, or tree branches in the fireplace. These materials can ignite suddenly and burn intensely, resulting in a flash fire, or chimney fire.
- Place a screen around your fireplace to prevent sparks from igniting nearby flammable materials.



Candle Safety

- There are 14,000 candle-related fires each year, resulting in 170 deaths, and \$350 million in property loss.
- Keep burning candles within sight, never leave unattended.
- Keep lighted candles away from items that can catch fire and burn easily, such as trees, other evergreens, decorations, curtains and furniture.
- Always use non-flammable holders and keep away from children and pets.
- Extinguish all candles before you go to bed, leave the room, or leave the house.



Holiday Safety for Children

- Don't buy toys for young children that must be plugged into an outlet; buy battery operated toys instead.
- Don't use space heaters where children are unsupervised.
- Don't leave extension cords on the floor with crawling infants; they can place them in their mouths.
- Never leave a child unsupervised while cooking, or when an electric or gas stove is within reach.



Avoid Counterfeit Electrical Products

- The holiday season is a prime time for counterfeit electrical products.
- Although they may be excellent copies of the genuine product, many are substandard and fail to pass minimum safety tests.
- Be cautious when purchasing Holiday decorations and gifts.



Tips on Counterfeit Products

- Avoid no-name electrical products or products sold at “deep discount stores”.
- Check to see if the packaging contains contact information for the manufacturer.
- Examine the warning label. It should be free from grammatical errors and not conflict with information elsewhere on the package.
- Beware of bargains that seem too good to be true. They may be counterfeit.
- Only purchase electrical products directly from the manufacturer, a reputable distributor or retailer.
- Buy only listed products.

Common Listing Marks for Electrical Products





GFCIs and Holidays

- Plug outdoor lights and electrical decorations into circuits protected by GFCIs
- A GFCI should be used in any area where water may come in contact with electrical products.
- Power surges and electrical storms may damage GFCIs.
- Monthly testing of GFCIs is a good practice.



Space Heaters

- Plug portable space heaters directly into an outlet; do not plug into extension cords, relocatable power taps, UPSs, or surge suppressors
- Keep space heaters at least three feet away from combustible materials.
- Don't use space heaters in rooms where children are unsupervised.
- Plug a space heater into a GFCI in any location near water.
- Check the cord before plugging in a heater; if frayed, worn or broken, do not use.
- Keep all heaters out of high traffic and exit areas.



Wrapping up the Holidays

- Use the gripping area of a plug when unplugging lights and appliances.
- Separate outdoor from indoor decorations. Label them.
- Discard broken or faulty lights.
- Store decorations away from children, pets, and water.
- Send all warranty and product registration forms to manufacturers.
- Post-holiday sales are a great time to purchase fire extinguishers, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.



Have Safe and Happy
Holidays