



Before dashing through the snow and roasting chestnuts over a fire, review some safety tips. Practicing caution will help keep this winter holiday season merry.

## **HOLIDAY DECORATING SAFETY**

For many, “decking the halls” is an essential part of making the winter holiday season festive, but many dangers can lurk behind the cheerful decorations. The National Fire Protection Association reports that one out of four Christmas tree fires are caused by placing them too close to a heat source. Holiday decorating doesn't have to be dangerous if a few safety tips are kept in mind.

## **CHRISTMAS TREE MANAGEMENT**

The steps of safely maintaining a real or artificial Christmas tree are similar since both focus on fire safety. Review the following safety tips about both tree options before choosing one this holiday season:

- Artificial trees should be flame retardant and checked by a testing organization such as Underwriters Laboratories.
- Real trees should have green pine needles that don't fall off when touched.
- Add water to the stand daily to prevent a real tree from drying out and catching fire.
- Both trees can catch fire, so they should be placed at least three feet away from any heat source.
- Christmas trees should have a sturdy stand to prevent them from falling over.
- Remove trees from the property when the needles begin falling to prevent a home fire.
- Consider recycling real trees after Christmas to prevent them from entering a landfill.

## **LIGHTING SAFETY**

- Lights always need to be turned off before going to bed or leaving home.
- Check descriptions for proper use. Some lights specify the safe locations for use.
- Buy lights that were reviewed by a testing organization such as Underwriters Laboratories.
- Replace strings of lights that have worn, broken cords and broken bulbs.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions on how many light strings can be connected.
- To prevent wind damage, outdoor lights should be securely fastened to trees, exterior wall siding and fences.
- If hanging outdoor lights, stay away from overhead power or feeder lines.

## LIGHTING SAFETY

- Consider using an electronic kinara, advent wreath, menorah or other religious candleholder to lower the chances of a fire.
- If candles are used in decorations, place them on a flat surface to prevent tipping, and extinguish before going to bed or leaving the home.
- Candles should never be used to decorate a tree because it could catch on fire.
- Households with children should avoid fragile and sharp decorations to prevent a potential injury.
- Keep poisonous plants such as poinsettias out of reach of pets and children, who may try to eat them.