

# HOLIDAY DECORATION SAFETY TIPS

## Consumer Product Safety Commission Document 611

### TREES

Many artificial trees are fire resistant. If you buy one, look for a statement specifying this protection. A fresh tree will stay green longer and be less of a fire hazard than a dry tree. To check for freshness, remember:

- A fresh tree is green.
- Fresh needles are hard to pull from branches.
- When bent between your fingers, fresh needles do not break.
- The trunk butt of a fresh tree is sticky with resin.
- When the trunk of a tree is bounced on the ground, a shower of falling needles shows that tree is too dry.

Place tree away from fireplaces, radiators and other heat sources.

Heated rooms dry trees out rapidly, creating fire hazards.

Cut off about 2 inches of the trunk to expose fresh wood for better water absorption. Trim away branches as necessary to set tree trunk in the base of a sturdy, water-holding stand with wide spread feet. Keep the stand filled with water while the tree is indoors.

Place the tree out of the way of traffic and do not block doorways. Use thin guy-wires to secure a large tree to walls or ceiling. These wires are almost invisible.



### SNOW

Artificial snow sprays can irritate lungs if inhaled. To avoid injury, read container labels; follow directions carefully.

### LIGHTS

Indoors or outside, use only lights that have been tested for safety. Identify these by the label from an independent testing laboratory.

Check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections.

Discard damaged sets or repair them before using.

Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, house, walls, or other firm support to protect from wind damage.

Use no more than three standard-size sets of lights per single extension cord.

Turn off all lights on trees and other decorations when you go to bed or leave the house. Lights could short and start a fire.

Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights, and any person touching a branch could be electrocuted! To avoid this danger, use colored spotlights above or beside a tree, never fastened onto it!

Keep "bubbling" lights away from children. These lights with their bright colors and bubbling movement can tempt curious children to break candle-shaped glass, which can cut, and attempt to drink liquid, which contains a hazardous chemical.



### CANDLES

- Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens.
- Always use nonflammable holders.
- Keep candles away from other decorations and wrapping paper.
- Place candles where they cannot be knocked down or blown over.

## TRIMMINGS

Use only noncombustible or flame-resistant materials.

Wear gloves while decorating with spun glass "angel hair" to avoid irritation to eyes and skin.

Choose tinsel or artificial icicles or plastic or nonleaded metals. Leaded materials are hazardous if ingested by 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.*
- *Avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food. A child could eat them!*



## FIRES

Before lighting any fire, remove all greens, boughs, papers, and other decorations from fireplace area. Check to see that flue is open.

Keep a screen before the fireplace all the time a fire is burning.

Use care with "fire salts" that produce colored flames when thrown on wood fires. They contain heavy metals that can cause intense gastrointestinal irritation or vomiting if eaten. Keep away from children.

## PAPER

When making paper decorations, look for materials labeled noncombustible or flame-resistant.

Never place trimming near open flames or electrical connections.

Remove all wrapping papers from tree and fireplace areas immediately after presents are opened.

Do not burn papers in the fireplace. A flash fire may result as wrappings ignite suddenly and burn intensely.

## GENERAL RULES FOR HOLIDAY SAFETY

- Keep matches, lighters, and candles out of the reach of children.
- Avoid smoking near flammable decorations.
- Make an emergency plan to use if a fire breaks out anywhere in the home. See that each family member knows what to do. **PRACTICE THE PLAN!**
- Avoid wearing loose, flowing clothes — particularly long, open sleeves — near open flames such as those of a fireplace, stove, or candlelit table.
- Never burn candles near evergreens. Burning evergreens in the fireplace also can be hazardous. When dry, greens burn like tinder. Flames can flare out of control and send sparks flying into a room or up the chimney to ignite creosote deposits.

Plan for safety. Remember, there is no substitute for common sense. Look for and eliminate potential danger spots near candles, fireplaces, trees, and/or electrical connections.

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