

# Holiday Safety Tips

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Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanza or New Year's! The holidays are a special, happy time of year. However, just like any other time, there is always a potential for fires and accidents--maybe even more so because of increased people traffic, decorations, baking, etc. Common sense can keep your celebration from turning ugly.

## CHOOSING A TREE

- ✚ **ARTIFICIAL TREES** are cleaner and safer but make sure they are fire retardant
- ✚ Make sure they have a UL label of approval
- ✚ **METAL TREES**, if used properly, are not fire hazards
- ✚ Only illuminate them with flood lights--never with electric lights which can get damaged by the sharp metal edges of the tree as well as cause severe shock and possibly start a fire
- ✚ Place the flood lights up out of reach of children and away from anything that can burn
- ✚ **NATURAL TREES** are cut-either by yourself or someone else. To avoid fire hazards, choose a tree that...
- ✚ ...has good color
- ✚ ...has needles that are hard to pull out
- ✚ ...has needles that bend and *then* break when bent between your thumb and index finger
- ✚ ...has sticky resin (sometimes referred to as sap) on the butt of the trunk
- ✚ ...does not drop a lot of needles when it's trunk is bounced off the ground

## TRIMMINGS & MAINTENANCE

- ✚ Keep a real tree outside until you are ready to decorate it
- ✚ use a stand that is appropriate for your tree
- ✚ If using a real tree, cut 1 - 2" off the bottom of the trunk to help absorb water
- ✚ Make sure your tree stand can hold *at least* one gallon of water
- ✚ A tree should use between 1 quart and 1 gallon of water per day, so be sure to check the level of water at least once a day. More is desirable
- ✚ Secure the tree to the wall or ceiling with string or wire to keep it from tipping
- ✚ Large quantities of needles falling off the tree indicate a fire hazard. Dispose of the tree immediately according to your local regulations
- ✚ Breakable ornaments and those with small parts & metal hooks should be placed out of reach
- ✚ Older ornaments which may be decorated with lead paint are a hazard to pets & children
- ✚ Metal tinsel can cause a short or a fire if touching electrical lights or wiring and can be dangerous if swallowed by children or pets

## LIGHTS

- ✚ Use miniature lights when possible as they will not dry out the needles as quickly

- ✚ All lights should have the UL approval label
- ✚ Use a sturdy ladder on a solid surface while decorating. Use the buddy system when hanging lights or decorations
- ✚ Inspect each set of lights (old & new) for 1) broken or cracked wires; 2) frayed or bare wires; 3) loose connections; 4) loose or missing bulbs
- ✚ Throw out or repair any damaged sets
- ✚ Unplug lights before replacing any bulbs. Read the packaging for proper wattage and voltage
- ✚ Never connect more than 3 sets of lights together or on an extension cord
- ✚ Do not staple or nail through electrical cords. It could cause an electrical shock
- ✚ Never use extension cords under carpets, across doorways, or pinched behind furniture
- ✚ Never overload receptacles
- ✚ Protect all electrical connections-both indoors and outdoors-from water
- ✚ Unplug all Christmas lights when leaving or going to bed and never pull on the cord to unplug
- ✚ Remove outdoor lighting when the season is over. These types of lights are not designed for prolonged exposure to the elements
- ✚ Never decorate a tree with real candles

#### *MISCELLANEOUS SAFETY IDEAS FOR AROUND THE HOUSE*

- ✚ All electrical toys should be UL approved
- ✚ Never burn wrapping paper or Christmas trees in a fireplace. They burn too quickly and can create a deadly chemical buildup in the chimney or throw off sparks that cause fires
- ✚ Remove all stockings, decorations, and greens from in front of the fire place and mantle before starting a fire
- ✚ Keep chocolate out of the reach of pets
- ✚ Poisonous plants such as mistletoe, poinsettias, holly berries, and ivy should be kept out of reach of children and pets
- ✚ Provide smokers with large, deep, non-tipping ashtrays. Make sure they are emptied often but that the butts are completely out before disposing
- ✚ Check all furniture and wastebaskets for smoldering cigarettes
- ✚ Alcohol is the #1 cause of many types of accidents around the holiday season. Please!, don't drink and drive