

CHRISTMAS SAFETY TIPS - Part I

Christmas Trees

Christmas tree safety begins with the selection and purchase of a fresh tree.

- When buying a live pre-cut tree, make sure the tree is still alive and healthy. A fresh tree is green, needles are hard to pull from the branches, and when bent between your fingers, needles do not break. Pull on the needles. If the needles come off easily, it is probably not in great condition. The trunk should be sticky and the limbs should be very flexible. Lift the tree and bounce the cut end on the ground, if a bunch of needles come tumbling off, it isn't a safe tree to take home.
- When you get the Christmas tree home, cut off the bottom two inches of trunk to expose the fresh wood. This will create a fresh, raw cut for the tree to soak in water, allow for better water absorption, and help to keep your tree from drying out and becoming a fire hazard. If you don't do this, the trunk may not be able to drink in the water in the Christmas tree stand.
- Keeping your thirsty Christmas tree well hydrated is the best way to prevent a tree fire. Keep the water in the stand well above the fresh cut bottom of the trunk. There are products also available to help you keep your Christmas tree from getting too thirsty.
- Christmas trees dry out with heat, so place your tree away from heat sources like the fireplace or heater vents. The cooler the Christmas tree stays, the better.
- The longer your Christmas tree stays in the house, the more it dries and becomes a fire hazard. Dispose of your Christmas tree in a timely manner following Christmas.
- When purchasing an artificial tree, look for the "Fire Resistant" label

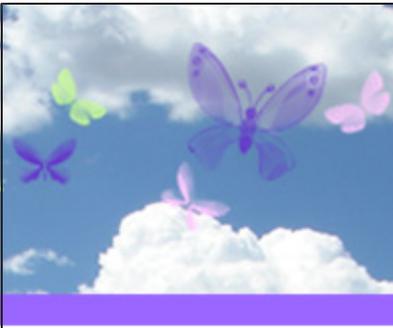
Christmas Lights – Inside and Outside

- Unplug the lights and decorations when you are not home, or they are otherwise not in use. Heat + a pine tree = house fire. The lights could short out and start a fire. The trees are highly flammable. Turn off all lights when you go to bed.
- Check all tree lights – even if you've just purchased them – before hanging them on your tree. Make sure all the bulbs work and that there are no frayed wires, broken sockets or loose connections.
- Turn off lights before you go to bed or leave the house.

- Never run electrical cords under carpets or rugs, over nails, in traffic areas, or where there is a chance of water.
- Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights, and a person touching a branch could be electrocuted.
- Before using lights outdoors, check labels to be sure they have been certified for outdoor use. To hold lights in place, string them through hooks or insulated staples, not nails or tacks. Never pull or tug lights to remove them. Plug all outdoor electric decorations into circuits with ground fault circuit interrupters to avoid potential shocks.
- Also, be sure to check all cords and plugs prior to using them for the year, for wear and tear. Throw out and replace any that look as though they are starting to fray or show bare wires. The smallest spark can possibly result in a very large fire.
- Make sure all external electrical decorations are well protected. Keep them away from moisture.
- Never overload an electrical receptacle with extension cords or three-way adapters. If you need to plug a lot of things into a single receptacle, use a power strip.
- Don't pull on an electrical cord to unplug it. Grasp the plug firmly and pull out straight so you don't bend the prongs.
- Replace any cord or plug that is cracked or discolored or feels hot to the touch when in use. If the original wire or plug is polarized (one prong is wider than the other), or if it has a third grounding prong, replace it with similar equipment.
- Call an electrician if your lights flicker and your appliances run sluggishly, or if you have a fuse that repeatedly blows or a circuit breaker that trips often. These are signs that the system is overloaded.

Sources

American Academy of Pediatrics; SafeUSA; U.S. Fire Administration; Christmas Safety Tips When You Have A Baby In The House, by Tiffany B.; Christmas-Safety-Chris.pirillo.com.; About.com.firstaid; Reader'sDigest.Com



the Hannah Geneser
foundation

