

Holiday Season Safety Tips

Planning for the holidays is a busy and joyful time. But all of the decorations, extra electrical cords and the parade of people going in and out of your home calls for more safety precautions to help you make this holiday season safe and happy for you and your family.

Here's a checklist for home holiday safety:

- Ask a friend or neighbor to watch your house and take in your newspaper and mail if you plan to spend the holidays away from home. Put lights throughout the house on timers to turn them on and off in your normal living pattern.
- If you display a live Christmas tree or live greenery, select the freshest possible. A moist tree is less likely to catch fire. Look for a trunk sticky with sap and for green needles that bend and are secure on the branches.
- When using a live Christmas tree, cut the base at a 45-degree angle. Place it in a container with water and always keep the water level above the cut.
- Place trees a safe distance from stoves, radiators, vents, fireplaces and any other heat source that may dry the tree. Inspect the tree for dryness daily.
- Inspect all holiday light wiring. Defective, worn or frayed electrical wiring should be thrown away. Check for the UL label on lights. Also, be sure to use fixtures specifically designed for outdoor use if you decorate your house, trees or yard.
- Use no more than three light sets on any one extension cord. Also, don't run electrical cords under rugs. Be sure all lights are turned off before you go to bed or leave the house.
- Place candles and other open flames away from decorations. Never leave burning candles unattended and always supervise children when burning candles.
- Keep a fire extinguisher near your Christmas tree. Make sure your family has a fire emergency escape plan. In case of fire, leave your home and call for help from a neighbor's home.

- When buying artificial decorations, check for "flameproof" or "fire retardant" qualities.
- Never burn wrapping paper in a fireplace or wood stove. Certain ink pigments react with heat and create airborne particulates that are dangerous to inhale. Also don't burn evergreens, they could flare out of control and send flames and smoke into your house.
- Cooking is a leading cause of home fires and home fire injuries. When you cook, be sure to wear clothes that fit close to the body so they won't be ignited by hot burners. Do not leave items cooking on the stove and be sure that pot handles are turned in.

The decorations around your house, lights, gifts, music and the presence of loved ones make the holiday season festive and fun, and with the proper precautions, safe.

Learn more about home safety, maintenance and other homeownership advice at www.hbasiouxempire.com.