

Holiday Safety Tips: Preventing Fire

Decorations and Christmas Trees

While holiday decorating is all about adding fun, sparkle and warmth to a very special season, it's important to remember that many of our favorite decorations carry the risk of fire or electrical injury if not used carefully. Don't let a preventable accident take the enjoyment out of your holidays – whether you're excitedly preparing for Christmas, Hanukkah, or Kwanzaa, take a few minutes to consider these decorating safety tips offered by the experts at Cable-Organizer.com — a leading provider of cable, wire and equipment management solutions.

Lights and Decorations

- Only use lights and decorations in accordance with manufacturers' instructions.
- Before you begin decorating, verify how many strands of lights it is safe to connect end-to-end (as a general rule, it's 3).
- Be careful not to overload extension cords. Before you start plugging in, find out the wattage rating of your extension cord, as well as the power requirements of any lights or decorations you're planning to plug into it. A wattage rating is the amount of electricity that an extension cord is built to carry, and if the combined power requirements (or "pull") of your lights and decorations exceed that rating, overheating and fire can occur.
- Every so often, check Christmas light wires to make sure that they're not warm to the touch.
- Always turn off all Christmas lights and decorations before going to bed or leaving the house.

Buying a Christmas Tree

Did you know that your choice of Christmas tree could affect its flammability factor? Older, dried-out trees ignite and burn much faster than those that are freshly cut and well hydrated, so when you're shopping for a natural (live) holiday tree, keep the following things in mind:

- Before taking a Christmas tree home, make sure that its needles are fresh, green, and firmly attached to the branches. Bend the needles between your fingers – if they break, the tree is too dry. Also check that the tree trunk's cut surface is sticky to the touch. As a final precaution, pick the tree up vertically and tap the trunk against the ground; if needles fall off, move on to another tree.
- As a general rule, Christmas trees with thicker needles take longer to dry out, so a robust variety like the Noble Fir is a good choice.
- If you opt for an artificial tree instead, be sure that it's flame retardant.

Setting Up Your Christmas Tree

The way you set up and care for your tree has a big effect on how long it will last, how beautiful it will stay, and, ultimately, how safe it will be to have in your home.

- Before putting your new Christmas tree into its stand, cut a couple of inches off the bottom of the trunk to expose fresher (and far more absorbent) wood. Taking a few minutes to do this will improve your tree's water intake, and make it harder for your tree to catch fire.
- Your tree stand should have a capacity of at least one gallon, which is the amount of water that the average six-foot Christmas tree can consume in a day's time.

