

Make Sure Your Holiday Decorations Are Safe To Use

Each year, holiday season fires in the United States claim the lives of more than 400 people, injure 2,600 more, and cause more than \$990 million in damage. According to the United States Fire Administration, there are simple lifesaving steps you can take to ensure a safe and happy holiday. By following some of these precautionary tips, you can greatly reduce your chances of becoming a holiday fire casualty.

Christmas trees: When buying a live tree, make sure the needles are green. The needles should not break if the tree is freshly cut. If you bounce the tree on the ground and needles fall off, the tree is too dry and should not be used. When you put the tree up in your home, be sure to keep it away from heat sources. Don't put it up too early, and don't leave it up for more than 2 weeks. Always be sure that it has plenty of water. When you take the tree down, do not burn it in the fireplace. Recycle it or have it hauled away by a community pickup service.

Holiday lights: Before using your lights, inspect them for bare spots or frayed wires, and use only lights that a testing lab has approved. Be sure not to overload your circuits; the best way to do this is to avoid stringing together more than three strands of lights. And never leave your holiday lights unattended.

Holiday decorations: All such decorations should be flame resistant. Be sure to place them away from heat sources. You should not burn wrapping paper in your fireplace. Such a fire may throw off sparks or produce a chemical buildup that could cause an explosion.

Candles: Always place candles in steady holders where they can't be easily knocked over, and do not go out of the house with candles burning. If you do use candles during the holidays, be sure to have a fire extinguisher nearby.

Smoke alarms: Each year at Christmas is an excellent time to change the batteries in your smoke alarm. If your smoke alarm is hardwired into the home's electrical system, be sure that it is working.

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