



# Newsletter

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## **Keep Safety in Mind When Decorating Your Home and Yard for the Holidays**

The holidays are a time for fun and relaxation—but not a time to relax your standards when it comes to safety.

Decorating your home and yard can create a multitude of hazards without proper care.

### **LIGHTS**

Indoors or out, use only lights that have been safety tested, and check the label for an independent testing laboratory. Check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections. Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, house, walls or other firm support to protect from wind damage. Use no more than three standard-size sets of lights per single extension cord. Turn off all lights on trees and other decorations when you go to bed or leave the house. Never use electric lights on a metallic tree.

### **TREES**

Many artificial trees are fire resistant. If you buy one, look for a statement specifying this protection. If you get a real tree, a fresh one will stay green longer and be less of a fire hazard than a dry tree. To check for freshness, remember:

- A fresh tree is green.
- Fresh needles are hard to pull from branches.
- When bent between your fingers, fresh needles do not break.
- The trunk of a fresh tree is sticky with resin.
- When the trunk of a tree is bounced on the ground, a shower of falling needles means the tree is too dry.

Place tree away from fireplaces, radiators and other heat sources. Heated rooms dry out trees rapidly, causing fire hazards. Cut off about two inches of the trunk to expose fresh wood for better water absorption. Trim away branches as necessary to set the tree trunk in the base of a sturdy, water-holding stand with wide spread feet. Keep the stand filled with water while the tree is indoors. Place the tree out of the way of traffic and do not block doorways.

### **DECORATIONS**

Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens. Always use non-flammable holders for candles. Keep candles away from other decorations and wrapping paper. Place candles where they can't be knocked over.

In homes with small children, take special care to:

- Avoid ornaments that are sharp and breakable.
- Keep trimmings with small removable parts away from children. Pieces could be swallowed or inhaled.
- Avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food. A child could eat them!





## The Holidays Mean Lots of Time in the Kitchen... Keep Yourself and Your Family Safe While Cooking!

Special foods are part of every family's holiday tradition. Roasted turkeys and hams, fruit pies and cookies, mashed potatoes and gravy—we're all spending more time in the kitchen this time of year. Unfortunately, more hours in the kitchen can mean more opportunity for kitchen fires.

Cooking is the number one cause of home fires. The biggest reason is that people start to cook something on the stove and forget it's there. Here are some things you can do to reduce the risk of cooking fires:

- Always stay in the kitchen while cooking on the range—especially when frying food.
- Keep things that can burn, such as dishtowels, paper or plastic bags, and curtains at least three feet away from the range top.
- Keep your cooking area clean. Do not let grease build up on the range top, toaster oven or oven.
- Before you start to cook, roll up sleeves and use oven mitts. Loose-fitting clothes can touch a hot burner and catch on fire.
- Electrical outlets in the kitchen, and especially near the kitchen sink, should have Ground-Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs). This will prevent a dangerous shock. If you don't have them, have an electrician put these in your home.
- Keep things you use a lot where you can reach them easily. Use a stepladder to get to things on a high shelf.

Including your kids in the cooking and baking process can be fun, but extra care and caution are required when cooking with young children to protect them from scalds and burns.

- Young children are at risk of being burned by hot food and liquids. Keep children away from cooking areas by enforcing a "kid-free zone" of at least three feet (one meter) around the stove.
- Keep pot handles facing in and over countertops.
- Have children sit at a table to mix or prep foods, not stand on a stool at the counter, which could result in a fall.
- When young children are present, use the stove's back burners whenever possible.
- Never hold a child while cooking, drinking or carrying hot foods or liquids.
- Teach children that hot things burn!
- Clean up any spills immediately. Kids and adults can slip on wet floors.
- When children are old enough, teach them to cook safely. Supervise them closely.

*Excerpted from Home Safety Council, "Cooking Safety," and USFA, "Cooking Fire Safety."*



### If Your Clothes Catch Fire...

Stop immediately, drop to the ground, and cover face with hands. Roll over and over or back and forth to put out the fire. Immediately cool the burn with cool water for 3 to 5 minutes and then seek emergency medical care.

