

Safety during the Holidays



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When it's the season to decorate for the holidays, you work hard to create just the right mood. Maybe you like the soft glow from candles, flames crackling in the fireplace, twinkling lights, and a tall tree loaded with ornaments. If you will plan parties and family get-togethers to celebrate the joy of the season, don't forget to make a decorating safety list and check it twice.

Keeping the Flame

Candles and fireplaces bring light and warmth to the dark days of December. Respect the power of fire and take appropriate precautions, now and year-round.

Candles:

- Do not leave unattended
- Supervise children and pets around burning candles and put away matches or lighters
- Burn them in containers made especially for candles, and set those containers on heat-resistant surfaces
- Do not set near trees, curtains, or other combustible items
- Place candles 3" or more apart from each other
- Keep them away from drafts
- Trim wicks to ¼"
- Buy candles labeled lead-free or from U.S. manufacturers

Fireplaces:

- Have your fireplace inspected by a professional
- Clean it
- Use a screen when in use
- Don't burn wreaths which can cause flare-ups
- Don't burn present wrapping paper -- metallic papers are toxic and some papers could float out of the chimney

Tending the Tree

Know what kind of tree to choose, and then make sure you decorate it with care.

How to select and maintain a tree:

- Pick a green tree: fresh spruce and pine trees have needles that don't break easily
- Cut off 2" from the end of the trunk
- Set the tree in a water-filled stand

- No blocking doorways or foot paths
- Place away from heat sources
- Anchor the tree so children or pets don't knock it down
- Refill water as needed
- Use artificial trees that are labeled as fire-resistant

Tips for decorating your tree:

- Use indoor lights inside your house and outdoor lights outside
- Check that lights are in safe, working order
- Use no more than three strings of lights on a single extension cord
- Keep cords out of the way, but not under rugs where they could cause a fire or tripping hazard
- Unplug lights when you leave or go to bed
- No edible or breakable decorations on lower branches in homes with small children and pets
- Keep bells on the bottom branches to let you know if someone is in the tree

Making Merry

The celebrations with family and friends are part of what makes the season "merry." Take care so these celebrations are also safe.

Cooking:

- Cook large quantities of meat for the right amount of time and at the right temperature (for advice, contact the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-674-6854).
- Avoid raw meat contamination of utensils and kitchen surfaces
- Don't wear loose-fitting clothing around flames
- Don't overload your outlets with appliances

Alcohol and Adults:

- Offer non-alcoholic choices
- Monitor guests' conditions and provide a designated driver or a room at your house, if necessary
- Supervision and Childproofing:
 - Hire someone or designate a person to watch small children during get-togethers
 - Keep visitors' purses and coats away from children
 - Clean-up so that children can't get into food, alcohol, or tobacco products

Your List Checked?

Then, make time for a little fa-la-la in your decked halls. Enjoy!