



Holiday Decorating Safety

1. Are Christmas trees potential hazards, if so, how can I prevent any danger?

- The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) reports that during the holiday season, U.S. fire departments respond to an average of 10 home fires each day involving Christmas trees. The NFPA also says that December and January are peak months for home fires, so it's important for families to keep safety top-of-mind during the holidays.
- Make sure to buy a fresh tree. Run your fingers through the needles to see if they break or fall off, if the needles stay intact the tree is fresh. Trees that have dry needles burn faster. Also, before you bring your tree home, cut a couple of inches off the trunk. This helps the tree absorb more water.
- Keep the real tree base filled with water at all times to reduce the risk of fire. Check daily to ensure there is enough water in the base.
- Keep the tree a safe distance from fireplaces, radiators, space heaters and other sources of heat, which tend to dry out the tree faster.
- While we all love the holidays, it's important to know your tree's expiration date. Fresh cut trees, even if watered daily, will dry out in about 4 weeks and should be taken down.

2. Are pre-lit artificial Christmas trees a fire hazard?

- Pre-lit artificial Christmas trees can be fire hazards.
- Fire experts expressed a need for a UL certification program to address the safety of artificial trees. As such, UL conducted extensive research to develop new safety requirements.
- If you're going to purchase a pre-lit artificial Christmas tree, be sure to look for trees that bear the UL Mark, indicating they meet the safety standard.

3. What safety tips should families keep in mind for holiday lights – both indoors and out?

- According to the U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, last year there were more than 15,000 injuries involving holiday decorating that resulted in emergency room visits.
- When taking holiday decorations out of storage, inspect them carefully. Wear-and-tear over the years may lead to potential safety hazards in the home such as:
 - Cracked sockets, frayed or bare wire and loose connections may pose a fire or shock hazard.
 - Don't try to fix frayed wires or cracked ornaments. Instead, throw out any broken decorations and replace them.
 - If you buy new Christmas lights for your home, look for UL-certified energy-efficient LED lights. LEDs use 75 percent less energy and last years longer than older style incandescent light string, according to ENERGY STAR.



- When decorating outdoors, be sure you're using lights and other electrical decorations appropriate for outdoor use.
 - The red UL Mark on the label indicates the item can be used both indoors and outdoors.
 - The green UL Mark on the label means the item can only be used indoors.
 - When hanging lights, use plastic hooks. Metal nails and staples can damage the wires, posing a shock or fire hazard.
 - Whether it's the lights for your tree or another power-driven decorative item, don't overload extension cords. Also, do not place power cords under rugs or run them through windows or doors, which pose a fire hazard.

4. What are other aspects of holiday decorating that carry safety concerns?

- Candles are another popular seasonal item. Keep them away from items that easily catch fire, such as decorations, window treatments and paper. However, candles also can affect the air you breathe.
 - When shopping for candles, look for ones that are unscented and have lead-free wicks.
 - Consider using LED candles, which have less risk – both in keeping air pollutants out of your home and reducing the risk that something could catch fire.
- To quote "Twas the Night Before Christmas," make sure "the stockings are hung by the chimney with care!" To do this:
 - Never hang stockings in front of a burning fire. Stockings can be hung when the fire is not lit, but should be moved to another location when the fireplace is in use.
 - When decorating your fireplace mantel, be sure to keep combustible materials such as greenery or ribbons away from any possible spark or flame.
 - Never burn used wrapping paper in the fireplace as it may cause intense flash fires. Instead, follow the city's recycling rules.
- Keep toddlers or young children in mind when decorating for the holiday.
 - Small decorations can be choking hazards, so keep them out of the reach of toddlers.
 - Be careful not to place glass or breakable ornaments too low on the tree where children can reach.
 - Make sure the toys that go under the tree are age appropriate.

5. What are things to consider when entertaining at home during the holidays?

- If you're preparing a big holiday meal, never leave ovens or stoves unattended for long periods of time.
 - If you do need to walk away, take your oven mitt with you, which is a good reminder that you have something on the stove or in the oven and need to return soon.
 - Designate the area around the stove as a "kid-free zone," and be sure to keep dishtowels and other things that can burn away from the stove.
 - When cooking, turn the handles of pots inward in case small children enter the "kid-free zone" and reach for the handles. Adults also may be injured by spilling hot food if they come in contact with handles hanging over the edge of the stove.



- Like candles, other items you bring in the home can affect the air you breathe. For example, some household cleaners emit toxic chemicals that can trigger health problems like asthma and allergies.
 - As you clean your home for holiday guests, choose healthier cleaners such as GREENGUARD certified products, which indicate the cleansers have undergone rigorous scientific testing to determine their effects on indoor air.
 - Also, use HEPA filters in your vacuum, which remove about 99 percent of particulates out of the air and reduce indoor pollutants..

6. Where can I go for more information?

- You can visit [SafeBee.com](https://www.safebee.com) for additional holiday safety tips.