

## **Holiday Decorating Safety**

### **By Basil Housewright**

Whether you are putting up Christmas tree lights indoor or outdoor holiday lights always purchase new ones from trusted retailers and electrical products that display a label indicating testing by Underwriters Laboratories or Intertek. Always connect outdoor lighting decorations into circuits protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIS). Throw away any sets of lights with frayed wires and don't overload electrical outlets with too many electrical devices. Don't connect more than three strands of lights together. These dangers can overheat an electrical socket and cause a fire. It's no coincidence that we hear more fire engines during December than any other time of the year, so always turn off the lights when you go to sleep or leave the house empty. Always secure outdoor lights for when it's windy and never puncture a string of lights when installing to your house or other structure. A damaged wire could cause an electrical shock or fire.

Don't set up a Christmas tree near a heat source such as a radiator or fireplace, and if you have an artificial tree, make certain it's flame resistant. Use battery operated candles for added safety, but if you prefer real candles, always keep them a safe 12-18 inches or more from any flammable product. Use flame resistant tree decorations and think safety when displaying the fireplace mantel with stockings or other flammable decorations such as pine cones.

If you use the fireplace a lot during the holidays, keep those special decorations a safe distance.

When it's time again to set up those outdoor Christmas lights on your house, think safety first. There are a lot of accidents every year from people falling off ladders. Serious injuries! There are some standard ladder safety rules to follow.

- A) Don't get lazy and try to move the ladder without having first climbed down off of it.
- B) Maintain 3 points of control on the ladder at all times for your safety. Either 2 hands and 1 foot or 2 feet and 1 hand.
- C) For extension ladders follow the one-to-four rule. For every four feet the ladder rises in height, move the base of the extension ladder one foot farther from the structure.
- D) Before using a ladder inspect it first.
- E) Maintain your balance best by keeping your hips within the side rails of the ladder.
- F) Use a wood or fiberglass ladder. Metal ladders can conduct electricity.

Just as with outdoor Christmas time lighting, the inflatable outdoor displays need to be carefully looked at each year to confirm that they are still safe for operating for another holiday season. Confirm that those extension cords are not damaged or frayed from last year's use and test inflation to confirm that no holes exist after your set up. Follow the same safety rule for your outdoor inflatable displays that you do for your outdoor lighting, turn them off when you go to sleep or leave the house empty.

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