

Are You Making These Christmas Safety Mistakes?

You hang a few “indoor” lights outdoors
Many holiday lights manufactured today are intended for both indoor and outdoor use, but you may come across some that are location specific. Indoor lights aren’t as resistant to moisture, which may cause electrical shorts and damage in wet weather.

Christmas safety tip:

Many products tested for safety in North America are labeled with a UL tag (for Underwriters’ Laboratories, a certification company that inspects such products). Indoor lights have a tag marked with a green UL. Outdoor lights are marked with a red UL.

You keep poinsettias in reach of your kids and pets.

This one is actually not as risky as you might think.

Despite its “poisonous” reputation, the plant is only mildly toxic. A 50-pound child would need to eat more than 500 poinsettia leaves to reach potentially toxic levels, and no deaths have been documented from consumption.

A child may get queasy or throw up after eating, say, five poinsettia leaves—but not much more will happen. (Plus, the leaves taste unpleasant, so it’s unlikely many would be consumed.)

The plants may cause drooling, vomiting, or diarrhea in cats and dogs, but medical treatment is rarely necessary unless symptoms are severe.

Christmas safety tip: To be safe, keep poinsettias out of the reach of pets and young children, but there’s no need to banish your favorite holiday plant.

There's no doubt winter is a magical time, filled with cozy fires, warm cocoa, and tons of holiday joy.



But if you're not taking extra precautions during Christmastime in particular, your winter wonderland can quickly turn into a holiday hazard.

In fact, there are plenty of safety practices you might not even realize you're ignoring right in your own home.

Putting your Christmas tree up wherever you think it looks best or keeping candles lit that fill your humble abode with the scents of pine trees and gingerbread cookies?

Not so fast! To make sure you have a happy and healthy holiday, we talked to home experts for the ultimate Christmas safety tips you need to follow.

- Water your Christmas tree daily.
- And keep it away from fire hazards.
- Use candles with care and caution. Consider using battery-operated ones.
- Don't overload your home's electrical circuits.
- Secure your home from possible break-ins.
- And consider smart technology to protect your home.
- Schedule packages to be delivered when you will be home to receive them.
- Don't share your holiday travel plans on-line.
- Detach hoses from spigots on the outside of your house.
- Clear the snow off your roof.
- Clean your chimney before building a fire.
- Be prepared for a kitchen fire.
- Don't use a deep fryer indoors.
- Warm up your car outside, not in the garage.
- Invest in a carbon monoxide detector.
- Know the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Make sure walkways and other outdoor areas of your home have adequate lighting.
- Use floor mats inside and outside of entryways.
- Turn off lights and other electronics before going to bed.
- Invest in multiple power backups.
- Safely maintain your outdoor decorations.

Holiday decorating tips

Hospital emergency rooms treat thousands of people annually who are injured from falls involving holiday decorations. Half of those injuries are associated with falls, and some could involve extension cords.

Here are some tips to make your holiday decorating safer:

- Never use furniture as a ladder.
- Follow the 1-to-4 rule for extension ladders: for every four feet the ladder rises, move the base out one foot from the structure.
- Always keep three points of contact on the ladder: two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand.
- Inspect the ladder for any damage prior to using it.
- Use the right ladder for the task at hand.

Electrical safety tips

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) indicates an average of 160 home fires, per year, started with Christmas trees. Those fires resulted in an annual average of two deaths, 12 injuries and over \$10 million in property damage.

Avoid electrical fires by purchasing lights from reputable retailers and only those approved by nationally recognized testing labs like UL, or CSA.

Inspect both indoor and outdoor lights for broken sockets, frayed wired and loose connections.

Don't overload outlets with too many electrical devices — this could cause a fire.

Review Holiday Fire Safety Tips for more information and Christmas safety tips.

Fire prevention tips

Being aware of fire safety tips can have a big impact in helping to keep your home safe while you are decorating during the holidays.

Even with all those Christmas tree fires, cooking equipment is the leading cause of home fires and injuries. According to the NFPA, many fires occur on Thanksgiving and Christmas day. Here are some holiday fire safety tips:

Mantels are beautiful when covered with stockings and greenery. But these items are flammable. If you use your fireplace frequently, consider hanging these decorations somewhere else.

When cooking, pay close attention to what you're doing and your surroundings.

Be sure you have smoke detectors at least 10 feet from your stove, and test them monthly.

Thanksgiving Safety

The kitchen is the heart of the home, especially at Thanksgiving. Kids love to be involved in holiday preparations. Safety in the kitchen is important, especially on Thanksgiving Day when there is a lot of activity and people at home.



- Stay in the kitchen when you are cooking on the stovetop so you can keep an eye on the food.
- Stay in the home when cooking your turkey and check on it frequently.
- Keep children away from the stove. The stove will be hot and kids should stay 3 feet away.
- Make sure kids stay away from hot food and liquids. The steam or splash from vegetables, gravy or coffee could cause serious burns.
- Keep the floor clear so you don't trip over kids, toys, pocketbooks or bags.
- Keep knives out of the reach of children.
- Be sure electric cords from an electric knife, coffee maker, plate warmer or mixer are not dangling off the counter within easy reach of a child.
- Keep matches and utility lighters out of the reach of children — up high in a locked cabinet.
- Never leave children alone in room with a lit candle.
- Make sure your smoke alarms are working. Test them by pushing the test button.

Did you know?



Thanksgiving is the leading day of the year for home fires involving cooking equipment.

Have activities that keep **kids out of the kitchen** during this busy time. Games, puzzles or books can keep them busy. Kids can get involved in Thanksgiving preparations with recipes that can be done **outside** the kitchen.



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Winter Holiday Safety

Winter holidays are a time for families and friends to get together. But that also means a greater risk for fire. Following a few simple tips will ensure a happy and fire-safe holiday season.

HOLIDAY DECORATING

- Be careful with holiday decorations. Choose decorations that are flame resistant or flame retardant.
- Keep lit candles away from decorations and other things that can burn.
- Some lights are only for indoor or outdoor use, but not both.
- Replace any string of lights with worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections. Read manufacturer's instructions for number of light strands to connect.
- Use clips, not nails, to hang lights so the cords do not get damaged.
- Keep decorations away from windows and doors.



HOLIDAY ENTERTAINING

- Test your smoke alarms and tell guests about your home fire escape plan.
- Keep children and pets away from lit candles.
- Keep matches and lighters up high in a locked cabinet.
- Stay in the kitchen when cooking on the stovetop.
- Ask smokers to smoke outside. Remind smokers to keep their smoking materials with them so young children do not touch them.
- Provide large, deep ashtrays for smokers. Wet cigarette butts with water before discarding.



Before Heading Out or to Bed

Blow out lit candles when you leave the room or go to bed. **Turn off** all light strings and decorations before leaving home or going to bed.

FACTS

- ! More than **one-third** of home decoration fires are started by candles.
- ! More than **two of every five** decoration fires happen because decorations are placed too close to a heat source.



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