

HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS

Each year, hospitals treat people for falls, cuts and shocks, related to holiday lights, decorations and Christmas trees. In addition, Christmas trees are involved in about 400 fires annually, resulting in injury, death and an average of more than \$15 million in property loss and damage. Candles are involved in 11,000 fires annually.

The Department of Environmental Safety offers the following information to help prevent the loss of life and property on campus and at home this holiday season.

TREES

* When purchasing an artificial tree, look for the label "Fire Resistant." Although this label does not mean the tree won't catch fire, it does indicate the tree will resist burning and should extinguish quickly.

* When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness. A fresh tree is green, needles are hard to pull from branches and when bent between your fingers, needles do not break. The trunk butt of a fresh tree is sticky with resin, and when tapped on the ground, the tree should not lose many needles.

* When setting up a tree at home, place it away from fireplaces and radiators. Because heated rooms dry live trees out rapidly, be sure to keep the stand filled with water. Place the tree out of the way of traffic and do not block doorways.

* Only fresh cut evergreen trees that are [specially tagged](#) by authorized growers are permitted in campus buildings.

LIGHTS

* Indoors or outside, use only lights that have been tested for safety by a recognized testing laboratory such as UL or FM, which indicates conformance with safety standards. Use only lights that have fused plugs.

* Check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections, and throw out damaged sets. Always replace burned-out bulbs promptly with the same wattage bulbs.

* Use no more than three standard-size sets of lights per single extension cord. Make sure the extension cord is rated for the intended use. Don't run electrical cords under rugs or carpets.

* Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights, and a

person touching a branch could be electrocuted.

* Before using lights outdoors, check labels to be sure they have been certified for outdoor use.

* Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, house walls, or other firm supports to protect the lights from wind damage. Use only insulated staples to hold strings in place, not nails or tacks. Or, run strings of lights through hooks (available at hardware stores).

* Turn off all lights when you go to bed, leave the house or leave your office. The lights could short out and start a fire.

* For added [electrical shock protection](#), plug outdoor electric lights and decorations into circuits protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). Portable outdoor GFCIs can be purchased where electrical supplies are sold. A qualified electrician can install GFCIs permanently to household circuits.

DECORATIONS

* Use only non-combustible or flame-resistant materials to trim a tree. When purchasing any decorations, look for those that are non-flammable or treated for fire resistance.

* Place decorations in locations that won't block exits. Avoid placing decorations in hallways of campus buildings.

* Choose tinsel or artificial icicles of plastic or nonleaded metals. [Leaded materials](#) are hazardous if ingested by children

* In homes with small children, take special care to avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable. Keep trimmings with small removable parts out of the reach of children to avoid the child swallowing or inhaling small pieces, and avoid

trimmings that resemble candy or food that may tempt a child to eat them.

* Wear gloves to avoid eye and skin irritation while decorating with spun glass "angel hair." Follow container directions carefully to avoid lung irritation while decorating with artificial snow sprays.

CANDLES

* Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens. Always use non-flammable holders, and place candles where they will not be knocked down. Avoid using candles in campus buildings.

* Only special types of candles may be used for campus parties or other gatherings. Please check the [public assembly guidelines](#) on the DES web site.

FIREPLACES

* Have your fireplace cleaned by a qualified chimney sweep and always use a properly sized fireplace screen.

* Never leave a fire in a fireplace unattended.

* Keep carpeting, furniture, and other combustibles away from the fire.

* Do not burn wrapping papers in the fireplace. A flash fire may result as wrappings ignite suddenly and burn intensely.

* Use care with "fire salts," which produce colored flames when thrown on wood fires. They contain heavy metals that can cause intense gastrointestinal irritation and vomiting if eaten. Keep them away from children.

SMOKE ALARMS

* Test the smoke alarms in your home and make sure they are in working order.