

# Wishing You a Happy – and SAFE – Holiday Season

**H**oliday decorating is a widespread tradition that should be filled with joyous memories – not visits from fire departments or trips to the emergency room. We don't often think about it, but the reality is that holiday decorating leads to thousands of consumer accidents annually. Falls from ladders, lacerations from broken ornaments and fires from dried Christmas trees, lit candles or unsupervised fireplaces are causing injuries – even deaths – and millions of dollars in property damage each year.

To help your holiday season safe, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and Underwriters Laboratories (UL) have provided families with the following safety tips that we wanted to pass along to you:

## *Trees and Decorations*

- **When buying live trees, check for freshness.** A fresh tree is green. Its needles are hard to pull from branches, and its needles do not break when bent between your fingers. The bottom 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 heat sources, such as fireplaces, vents, and radiators.** Because heated rooms rapidly dry out live trees, be sure to monitor water levels daily and keep the tree stand filled with water. Place the tree out of the way of traffic, and do not block doorways with the tree. Also, keep the tree well watered to slow down drying.
- **When buying an artificial tree, look for the label “Fire Resistant.”** Although this label does not mean that the tree will not catch fire, it does indicate that the tree is more resistant to catching fire.
- **When decorating a tree in homes with small children, take special care to avoid sharp, weighted, or breakable decorations.** Keep trimmings with small removable parts out of the reach of children who could swallow or inhale small pieces, and avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food that may tempt a young child to eat them.

## *Candles*

- **Keep burning candles within sight.** Extinguish all candles before you go to bed, leave the room, or leave the house.
- **Keep candles on a stable, heat-resistant surface where kids and pets cannot reach them or knock them over.** Lighted candles should be placed away from items that can catch fire and burn easily, such as trees, other evergreens, decorations, curtains and furniture.

## *Lights*

- **Use only lights that have been tested for safety by a nationally recognized testing laboratory, such as UL.** Lights for both indoor and outdoor usage must meet strict requirements that testing laboratories are able to verify. On most decorative lights available in stores, UL's red holographic label signifies that the product meets safety requirements for indoor and outdoor usage. UL's holographic label, with the green UL Mark, signifies it meets requirements for only indoor usage.
- **Check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections.** Throw out damaged sets and do not use electric lights on a metallic tree.
- **Check each extension cord to make sure it is rated for the intended use.**
- **Check outdoor lights for labels showing that the lights have been certified for outdoor use,** and only plug them into a ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI)-protected receptacle or a portable GFCI.

## *Fireplaces*

- **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 swallowed. Keep them away from children.
- **Do not burn wrapping papers in the fireplace.** A flash fire may result as wrappings ignite suddenly and burn intensely.

