



Loss Control Insights

Holiday Electrical Safety

The holidays are one of the most festive, and therefore, most decorated times of year. It is during this brief period of time that we literally deck the halls with as many lights and decorations as we can stand.

Unfortunately, the holiday season is also one of the busiest for firefighters. All the beautiful lights that you string across your home can also present a serious electrical hazard if the proper precautions are not taken.

Before flipping the switch, make sure you have followed a few simple electrical safety tips and precautions. This will help ensure that you remain safe from electrical shocks and fire.

Holiday Fire Statistics:

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA):

30% of all home fires and 38% of home fire deaths occur during the months of December, January, and February.

Electrical distribution or lighting equipment was involved in two of every five (40%) of home holiday fires.

In one-quarter (26%) of the holiday fires and in 80% of the deaths, some type of heat source, was too close to the tree.

Holiday electrical safety tips to safeguard you and your family:

- If you use a real Christmas tree, make sure that you keep it watered the entire time that it is inside your home.
- By keeping it watered, can reduce your chance of it becoming ignited by an electrical short or excessive heat.
- Before placing lights on your home, check each strand thoroughly for any damaged cords, frayed ends, or loose connections.
- If you have older lights that do not have fused plugs, replace your old strings with new ones.
- Fused plugs add an additional layer of safety by preventing sparks in the event of a short circuit.
- To avoid any unwanted damage to your holiday lights during storage, store them in a tightly sealed container.
- This will help prevent any damage from water or rodents.
- Make sure that you replace all burned out bulbs with a bulb of the correct wattage.
- Never use tacks, nails, or screws to hold your lights in place. Instead, use insulated hooks that will help prevent shorts.
- Elevate the plugs of any cords that are running across the ground. This will help keep them free of snow, water, and debris that could cause damage and shorts.
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- Only buy lights that have been laboratory tested. You can typically find the UL listing on the outside of the box. This ensures that the lights have passed rigorous safety and performance standards.
- Always check the recommended usage for your lights. This means only using indoor lights for inside use and outdoor lights for outside use.
- Many of today's lights are rated for both indoor and outdoor usage. Indoor-only lights, however, have thinner insulation that is more easily damaged when exposed to the elements.
- Always turn off your lights whenever you are sleeping or not at home.
- Plug all outdoor lights into a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) outlet.

Remember as a result of haphazard installation and ignoring many basic safety rules, the holidays often result in more fires than there normally are. With a little holiday electrical safety planning and following the above electrical safety tips and using a little common sense, you can avoid almost all electrical fires.

~ Have a Safe and Happy Holiday Season ~