



November 30, 2009

Happy and Safe Holiday Decorating

El Paso Electric urges you to give yourself and your loved ones the gift of electrical safety this holiday season. Here are a few electrical safety tips and precautions:

Indoor and Outdoor

- Before you begin decorating, read and follow the manufacturer's instructions concerning installation and maintenance of all electrical decorations.
- Use only the lights and other electrical decorations that have been certified by a recognized independent testing laboratory such as UL, ETL or CSA.
- Carefully inspect each decoration before plugging into an outlet. Cracked sockets, frayed, loose or bare wires, and loose connections may cause a serious electric shock or start a fire. Replace damaged items with new decorations.
- Always unplug a light string or electrical decoration before replacing light bulbs or fuses.
- Don't overload extension cords - it could cause the cord to overheat and start a fire. **Use no more than three standard-size sets of lights per extension cord.**
- Don't allow children or pets to play with light strings, candle lights or other electrical decorations. Even small light decorations can produce a deadly electric shock if they are misused.
- Turn off **all** electrical light strings and decorations before leaving home or going to bed.

Outdoor Decorating

- Use only lights and other electrical decorations certified for outdoor use. Plug outdoor electric lights and decorations into circuits protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs).
- When hanging lights around your roofline or in trees, be sure to survey the area for overhead power lines and maintain at least a 10-foot distance.
- Don't mount or support light strings in any way that might damage the cord's wire insulation. **Never nail or staple light strings or extension cords down.**
- Keep all outdoor extension cords and light strings clear of snow and standing water and well protected from weather. Keep all electrical connections off the ground and hang sockets downward to prevent water from seeping into them.
- Do not run electrical cords through door or window openings where they can be damaged.

Indoor Decorating

- If you buy an artificial tree, check for a "flame resistant" label.
- Unplug the lights when changing bulbs or when adjusting them on the tree.
- Don't let bulbs touch any flammable material.
- Never try to bypass a fuse built into a string of lights.
- If you need to use extension cords, use only UL-approved cords that are rated to carry the electrical loads connected to them. Uncoil extension cords completely before using. Place extension cords away from heat sources and bulbs.
- Never place cords under rugs and doors or through windows where they might be pinched or become worn.
- Keep cords out of water and away from metal objects.
- Be aware that cut Christmas trees or real Christmas trees cause the most fires during the holiday season. Make sure the base of the tree is maintained properly with the proper chemicals and water.