

Winter/Holiday Safety

The winter holidays are a time for celebration, and that means more cooking, home decorating, entertaining, and an increased risk of fire due to heating equipment.

Facts & figures

In 2002, there were 240 Christmas tree fires in U.S. homes, resulting in 23 deaths, 12 injuries and \$11.4 million in direct property damage.

During 1999-2002, an average 310 home fires started when Christmas trees ignited. These fires caused an estimated annual average of 14 civilian deaths, 40 civilian injuries and \$16.2 million in direct property damage.

During 2002, an estimated 18,000 home fires started by candles were reported to public fire departments. These fires resulted in an estimated 130 civilian deaths, 1,350 civilian injuries and an estimated direct property loss of \$333 million.

Fourteen percent of the candle fires occurred in December. This is almost twice the 8% monthly average. Christmas was the peak day for home candle fires. Ten percent of the home fires reported on Christmas were started by candles.

In 11% of the December candle fires, the fires began when a decoration caught fire. This was true in only 3% of the fires during the rest of the year.

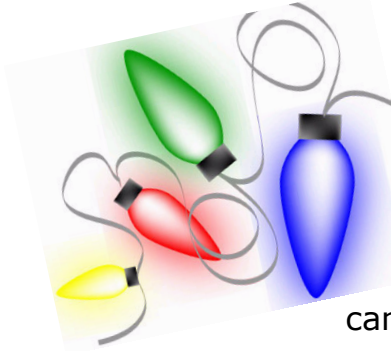


Source: NFPA's One-Stop Data Shop



Safety tips:

Holiday decorating & lighting



Use caution with holiday decorations and whenever possible, choose those made with flame-resistant, flame-retardant or non-combustible materials.

Keep candles away from decorations and other combustible materials, and do not use candles to decorate Christmas trees.

Purchase only lights and electrical decorations bearing the name of an independent testing lab, and follow the manufacturer's instructions for installation and maintenance.

Carefully inspect new and previously used light strings and replace damaged items before plugging lights in. Do not overload extension cords.

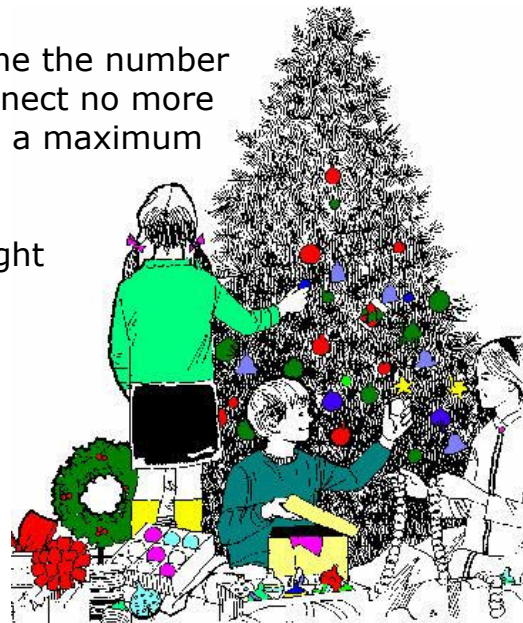
Check your strands of lights to determine the number of strands that may be connected. Connect no more than three strands of push-in bulbs and a maximum of 50 bulbs for screw-in bulbs.

Always unplug lights before replacing light bulbs or fuses.

Don't mount lights in any way that can damage the cord's wire insulation (i.e., using clips, not nails).

Keep children and pets away from light strings and electrical decorations.

Turn off all light strings and decorations before leaving the house or going to bed.



Holiday entertaining

Unattended cooking is the leading cause of home fires in the U.S. When cooking for holiday visitors, remember to keep an eye on the range.

If you smoke, smoke outside.

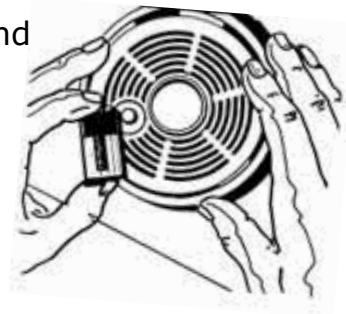


Wherever you smoke, provide plenty of large, deep ashtrays and check them frequently.

Cigarette butts can smolder in the trash and cause a fire, so completely douse cigarette butts with water before discarding.

After a party, always check on, between and under upholstery and cushions and inside trash cans for cigarette butts that may be smoldering.

Keep matches and lighters up high, out of sight and reach of children (preferably in a locked cabinet). When smokers visit your home, ask them to keep their smoking materials with them so young children do not touch them.



Test your smoke alarms, and let guests know what your fire escape plan is.

NFPA does not test, label or approve any products. Updated: 12/05

