



The Holidays

Safety in the home

Winter brings the excitement and anticipation of Christmas and the holidays. Get in the spirit by tapping into your childlike wonder by preparing your home for the holiday season. Of course, this time of the year requires serious attention to detail to ensure the holiday is accident-free.

The National Fire Protection Association reports that between 2013-17, an average of 160 home fires were caused by a Christmas tree. Electrical distribution or lighting equipment was responsible for at least 44% of these incidents. If you have avoided an inspection by an electrician, it's essential to hire their services before straining your home's power supply with excessive decorations.

Decorate safely

Setting the scene for Christmas includes holiday plants, festive lights and fir or cinnamon scents. If decorations are part of your family's tradition, follow these tips from the National Safety Council to keep your well-being in mind.

- Keep potentially poisonous plants like mistletoe, holly berries, Jerusalem cherry and amaryllis away from pets and children.
- When using an artificial tree, ensure that it is fire resistant.
- Replace lights that have broken sockets, frayed or bare wires or loose connections.
- Turn off all lights and decorations before going to sleep or leaving the house.

Displaying a live Christmas tree requires homeowners to cut off about two inches of the trunk to expose fresh wood to promote better water absorption.

Fireplace safety

It's critical to ensure your fireplace is in good working order before igniting ablaze and hanging your stockings with care. The Chimney Safety Institute of America breaks inspection requirements into three levels.

- Level one: When the chimney is intended for use under continued service, and no changes have been made, only a basic inspection is required.
- Level two: A more thorough examination should be made when changes to the fuel source, shape or flue are administered.
- Level three: The highest inspection level is performed if issues are found during levels one or two. This typically results in repairs to the permanently attached components.

According to the CISA, most chimney fires go undetected until significant damage has already impacted the structure. For peace of mind this holiday season, hire an expert inspector to ensure it's safe to roast chestnuts over an open fire.

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