Holiday Safety – Fact Sheet

WHAT ARE SOME SAFETY TIPS WHEN USING LIGHTS AND EXTENSION CORDS?

- Only use lights and extension cords that are in good condition. Check for frayed wires, bare spots, gaps in the insulation, broken or cracked sockets/plugs, excessive kinking or wear. Check the cords to see if they feel warm when they have been on for a while.
- Turn off the lights when you leave work, or if at home, when you are asleep or away.
- Always follow the manufacturers instructions about how many sets of lights that can be strung (plugged in) together.
- Use only indoor lights and extension cords indoors, and, of course, outdoor lights and cords outdoors. Use Ground Fault Interrupters (GFCI) outlets for outdoor power.
- Use mini or LED lights as they have cool-burning lights (and LED lights save electricity). Make sure all of the sockets contain a light bulb.
- Never remove the ground pin, or file the wide peg of plug as this interferes with the electrical grounding.
- Never put extension cords through doorways or under carpets.
- Do not overload electrical outlets.

What are some additional decorating safety tips?

If you use an artificial tree or if you are hanging decorations, buy only non-flammable or flame-resistant decorations and trees.

- Do not use angel hair (glass wool) together with spray-on snowflakes. This combination is very combustible.
- Do not use metallic ornaments on the tree. If they make contact with defective wiring they could become a shock hazard.
- Do not use nails, tacks, or staples to hang cords and lights. They can damage the insulation on the outside of the wire and create corrosion or a short circuit.

What are some tips if I use a ladder?

- Always use a ladder when hanging decorations on the tree, walls or when outside.
- Stepladders should be about 1 m (3 ft) shorter than the highest point you

have to reach. This height gives a wider, more stable base.
- Open the stepladder spreaders and shelf fully.
- Check stability. Make sure that all of the ladder’s feet are on a firm, level and non-slippery surface.
- On portable ladders, maintain three-point contact by keeping two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand on the ladder at all times.
- Do not overreach. Climb down and move the ladder when needed.
- Do not “shift” or “walk” a ladder when standing on it.
- Do not stand, climb, or sit on the stepladder top or pail shelf.

How do I take care of a live tree?

Live trees quickly become dry and are a fire hazard. Most trees will last about 14 days. If you are decorating a live tree for the workplace, you may want to take it down before people leave for holidays.

- When buying a live tree, give it a shake. Needles will fall if the tree is dry because it was cut some time ago. Pick one that does not lose its needles.
- Cut 2 to 5 centimetres from the trunk of the tree to encourage the tree to drink more water.
- Water the tree!! Ideally, it should have a sturdy stand that holds about 4 litres of water. A two-metre-tall tree will drink about four litres every two days.
- Check the water level every day.
- Use a preservative in the water. If you are concerned about small children or pets drinking the water, use a small amount of sugar instead.
- Keep the tree away from heating vents or registers, fireplaces, high traffic areas, and exits. As well, try to position the tree so you do not have to use long extension cords.
- Consider using a wire connected to a hook or the wall to prevent the tree from falling over.

If you are using a chainsaw to cut your own tree, be sure you are aware of the various safety steps and procedures.

What are other holiday safety tips?

- Only burn candles away from combustible materials (papers, cloth, drapes, curtains, etc.). A good practice would be to keep candles one metre away from anything that can burn. Trim candle wicks to about 0.5 cm (0.25 inches) before burning to keep the flame small and prevent uneven burning and dripping. Use a non-combustible candleholder and never leave a candle unattended. Never use them on live or artificial trees. Never use a candle if oxygen, e.g., for medical purposes, is used in the area. Consider substituting wax candles and liquid fuel lanterns with flameless LED battery-operated candles.
- Be sure your home is equipped with a working carbon monoxide detector, smoke alarm, fire extinguisher, and a first aid kit.
- Before buying toys for children or when donating them to a charity, always consider the safety of the toy (e.g., small pieces can be a choking hazard, movement of pieces that may be pinch points, quality of materials, etc.) Also consider the age and ability of the child, or other children who may also play with the toy.

- It’s always important to keep foods out of the danger zone, which is between 4°C (40°F) and 60°C (140°F). Keep hot foods hot, at least 60°C (140°F) and keep cold foods cold at 4°C (40°F) or lower. Do not leave hot or cold foods at room temperature for more than 2 hours.

Be merry, but be safe, and thus have a happier holiday season. Cheers!

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