

Holiday Decorating Safety Steps

by Christina Hansen

When shopping for lights, electric decorations and extension cords, purchase only the ones that are UL-listed and follow these safety tips to ensure a safe and happy holiday!

Only use lights and decorations in accordance with manufacturers' instructions.

Before you put them up, inspect all lights, electric decorations and extension cords for signs of damage to wire insulation, plugs, and bulbs. If the damage can be repaired (i.e., bulbs replaced), do not use the item until the repair has been made. If cords and plugs are damaged, discard and replace the decoration.

Always unplug lights before changing bulbs, replacing fuses, or making any other repairs.

If you need to replace a bulb, make sure that the wattage rating of the replacement bulb you're using matches that of the light strand. Using a bulb with too high a wattage can cause the light string to overheat, creating a fire risk.

If you're planning to decorate outdoors, make sure that you use lights and decorations that are rated for outdoor use. If you're in doubt, just check the color-coded UL mark on the product's package. A green holographic UL mark says, "indoors only, please," while a red one indicates that the product is safe for both indoor and outdoor use.

When hanging holiday lights outdoors, reduce your risk of electric shock by passing up metal ladders in favor of ladders made of non-conductive materials like wood or fiberglass-reinforced plastic.

Before you begin decorating, verify how many strands of lights it is safe to connect end-to-end.

Be careful not to overload extension cords. Before you start plugging in, find out the wattage rating of your extension cord, as well as the power requirements of any lights

or decorations you're planning to plug into it. A wattage rating is the amount of electricity that an extension cord is built to carry, and if the combined power requirements of your lights and decorations exceed that rating, overheating and fire can occur.

Every so often, check holiday light wires to make sure that they're not warm to the touch.

Always turn off all holiday lights and decorations before going to bed or leaving the house.

Christina Hansen is a product specialist at CableOrganizer.com.



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