

# 5 SAFETY TIPS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

The holiday season is officially upon us. Unfortunately, many seasonal traditions provide a special set of risks for homeowners each year. As you gear up for the festivities, pay special attention to these hazards to keep your holidays safe and happy.

## 1 CHRISTMAS TREES

Christmas trees are highly combustible and can cause hundreds of holiday house fires each year. Remember to keep real trees fresh and watered daily to prevent them from drying out. And discard them as soon as the holidays are over. Artificial trees should be flame retardant.

### *Put Fire Safety at the Source!*

Whether real or artificial, a tree should be kept at least 3 feet from heat sources, including space heaters, fireplaces, candles, and radiators. According to the [National Fire Protection Agency \(NFPA\)](#), more than a fifth of tree fires (22%) are caused by a heat source too close to the tree.

## 2 CANDLES

The holiday season is a time to keep our homes “merry and bright,” so it’s no surprise [candle fires peak in December](#). Keep candles away from children and pets, and place them far from any flammable decorations, curtains, or wrapped presents. Flameless candles are also a great option to bypass the hazard of an open flame.

## 3 DECORATIVE LIGHTS

The NFPA also reports nearly half of Christmas tree fires are due to electrical distribution or lighting equipment. When decorating your tree or home, use lights according to their label—indoor and outdoor lights are not interchangeable. Generally, it’s best to connect no more than three strings of lights to one outlet. If you’re unsure of the maximum watt capacity, use a power strip with a built-in circuit breaker to provide added protection.

### *Be Cautious with Outdoor Lights*

When decorating outside, keep extension cords dry and protected from the elements. If winter winds catch outdoor string lights, you may face electrical hazards. And, while it’s tempting to let your home twinkle all night long, it’s important to turn off all outdoor and indoor lights before bed or leaving the house.

## 4 HOLIDAY COOKING

We all look forward to home-cooked holiday dishes and goodies. But the NFPA says [cooking fires are the leading cause of home fires and injuries](#), with accidents peaking on Thanksgiving and Christmas. Always stay present while frying, boiling, grilling, or broiling food; set timers and stay in the house while baking or roasting; keep flammable objects such as oven mitts, food packaging, towels, or wooden utensils away from the stove or other heat-generating appliances; and clean your stovetop and counters regularly to clear any grease or debris.

### *Protect Your Kitchen*

You can also protect your kitchen by testing smoke alarms, purchasing a [home fire extinguisher](#), and reviewing [fire safety plans](#).

## 5 LADDERS

Though ladders are often needed to string up lights and other decorations, it’s important to take some extra precautions during the holidays. Thousands are [injured every year](#) due to improper ladder use, so take steps for safety: Choose the right ladder for the job—ladders should extend 3 feet above the roofline when working outside; check to be sure you’re under the maximum weight load; inspect your ladder regularly for damage; place your ladder on a level, stable surface; and maintain three points of contact (two hands and one foot or two feet and one hand) when climbing.

**By following these 5 tips, you can help keep your home and family safe during the holidays while enjoying the festivities. Enjoy your holidays!**

