

### Safe Holiday Decorating

The holiday season is an exciting and usually hectic time. Amidst all the preparation and festivities, we mustn't overlook the potential safety hazards that may be present in your home during this joyful time of year. Just as Santa makes his list, don't forget to keep your own safety checklist close at hand.

Here are some tips from Johnson Inc. to help ensure your holidays are filled with comfort and joy.

- Whenever possible, use artificial trees, as opposed to real ones which can pose a greater fire hazard. Look for a "Fire Resistant" label when purchasing an artificial tree.
- If you choose a real tree, it should be freshly cut and have a strong green colour. Ensure that it's watered daily to keep it from drying out and becoming a fire hazard.
- Whether they're real or artificial, don't place trees too close to heat source such as fireplaces, wood stoves, electric heaters and televisions.
- Decorations should be flame-retardant, non-combustible and non-conductive.
- Along with regular lighting, don't forget to turn off all tree lights and decorations when leaving your home and before going to bed.
- Lit candles should be in a sturdy, noncombustible holder and kept away from children, pets and combustible materials. Never leave a lit candle unattended; and before going to bed, don't forget to check to make sure they've all been put out.
- Lights should be Canadian Standards Association or Underwriter Laboratories of Canada certified and should be inspected before use. Replace any bulbs that are broken or not working and if there are frayed or damaged wires, replace the entire set.
- Consider using LED lights when decorating. They don't give off as much heat as regular lights, they last longer, and they can save you money.
- Ensure you use decorating lights properly. Exterior lights should not be used inside the home as they can become too hot. Indoor lights should not be used outside – they aren't designed to withstand outdoor weather conditions.
- Take care when attaching lights to the exterior of your home to ensure they aren't damaged. Use ladders properly when reaching high places to hang decorations and lights inside and outside your home.
- Ensure outside Christmas decorations are secured and tied down properly.
- Extension cords should never be covered or lodged under carpets, rugs or furniture. They could easily overheat and cause a fire.
- Avoid joining extension cords if possible. If it cannot be avoided, ensure you seal the connections and all the open ends with electrical tape. This will keep water out and avoid short circuiting, as well as minimize the potential of electrical shock.
- When connecting lighting, be careful not to create a tangle of cords, plugs and wires from the same electrical outlet, and don't overload an outlet with cords, adapters or power bars. Also remember to never try to force a three-prong plug into a two-prong extension cord or wall outlet.
- Plug all outdoor electric decorations into circuits with Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters to avoid a potential shock hazard.
- When small children are in your home, avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable. If you do have delicate, breakable ornaments around your home, remember to place them out of the reach of children. As well, any small, removable parts on ornaments should be kept out of the reach of children to prevent swallowing.

- Make sure your home has a working fire extinguisher that is rated for all types of fires.
- Be aware of product recalls. For up-to-date information, visit [www.healthycanadians.gc.ca](http://www.healthycanadians.gc.ca).