

Bringing Workplace Safety & Health Home

Home Safety Council® Offers Home Holiday Decorating Tips

Tis the season for families to begin decorating their homes for the holidays and the national nonprofit Home Safety Council (HSC) is urging families to keep safety top of mind when hanging the holly and mistletoe this year. While home injuries are a year-round concern, many popular decorating traditions such as stringing holiday lights and lighting candles contribute to increased home injury risks.

A recent HSC survey found that:

- 60% of families worry more about home injuries during the winter season than any other time of year;

In preparation for the holidays:

- 53% of the families surveyed said they plan to put up holiday lights,
- 40 % will decorate outdoors,
- and almost 29% will use candles.

“This holiday season, the Home Safety Council is urging families to take a few simple safety steps that can pay big dividends in preventing injury,” said Meri-K Appy, president of HSC. “Families are really pressed for time during the holidays but it isn’t difficult or time consuming to put home safety at the top of the list. Just a few extra moments can make a life-changing difference in keeping family members safe during the holidays and year-round.”

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, each year hospital

emergency rooms treat nearly 12,800 people for injuries related to holiday decorating, including falls and electrical shocks. Before getting out festive candles and lights or reaching for a ladder to decorate this year, HSC offers the following tips and advice.

Candle Safety

While candles contribute to a warm, glowing atmosphere, research shows home fires caused by candles peak during the holiday season, with the highest number of candle fires occurring on Christmas Day, followed by New Year's Day and Christmas Eve.

To eliminate the risk presented by an open candle flame, use battery-powered candles whenever possible, especially when you combine candles with greenery or other decorations. If you are planning to decorate with candles this holiday season, visit www.homesafetycouncil.org/safety_guide/s_g_candle_w001.aspx for the complete list of HSC tips on using candles safely.

Holiday Electrical Safety

Festive lights and electrical decorations create cheer both inside and outside the home, but they can also lead to fire hazards and electrical shock risks if they are not handled properly.

Always inspect holiday lights and extension cords before decorating and replace any that are fraying or damaged. Pay special attention to lights, cords or decorations that

may have been damaged from winter weather conditions. For the complete list of HSC's recommended electrical safety precautions for decorating your home, visit www.homesafetycouncil.org/safety_guide/s_g_holiday_w001.aspx.

Ladder Safety

Falls are by far the leading cause of home injury fatalities. The safest way to climb when hanging decorations is to use a safe and sturdy ladder; it's too risky to climb on a chair.

Before using a ladder to hang holiday lights, choose a location that is well away from all power lines. Coming in contact with live wires can be fatal. Follow HSC's comprehensive ladder safety tips at www.homesafetycouncil.org/safety_guide/s_g_ladder_w001.aspx