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Safety Tips for Decking the Halls

Haul out the holly, string up the lights, and hang the stockings by the chimney (with care)! The holiday season is finally here, which means it's time to deck the halls with all kinds of festive decorations.

Your Trusted Choice® independent insurance agent wants to ensure your holidays are as merry and bright as possible, so before you adorn your mantle with garland and dangle mistletoe over your door, please read these holiday decorating safety tips.

- **Christmas trees:** Trimming the tree is the main decorating event in many households, but the tree can become a fire hazard if it's dried out. Remember to replenish the water in your tree stand on a daily basis, so that your tree remains healthy and hydrated for the duration of the holiday season. (Also, check out [this article](#) for more Christmas tree safety tips.)
- **Holiday foliage:** Poinsettias, holly, Jerusalem cherries, and mistletoe are all toxic if ingested. If you have pets or small children in the house, avoid using these decorations or opt for the artificial versions.
- **Artificial snow:** If you're longing for a white Christmas, spraying windows with artificial snow can give your house a frosty glow – even if you live in a warm climate. However, spray-on snow can irritate your lungs, so make sure to follow the directions carefully and only use the spray in well-ventilated areas.
- **Fireplaces:** Adorning the mantle with garlands, stockings, and other decorations is a holiday tradition in many households, but keep these trimmings clear of working fireplaces. You should also be careful when using fire salts, which produce colored flames, since they are highly toxic if ingested.
- **Lights:** Before hanging lights indoors or outdoors, check the strings for cracked sockets, broken bulbs, or frayed/bare wires. Also, only use lights that are approved by a national testing lab, such as UL or ETL/ITSNA. Do not use electric lights on metallic trees because faulty lights can cause branches to become charged and possibly electrocute someone. If you're using outdoor lights, make sure they are approved for that use and plugged into a ground-fault circuit interrupter device.
- **Candles:** Flickering candlelight can give your home a cozy, warm glow, but candles cause more than 11,000 fires every year, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. If you're using candles to decorate for the holidays, keep a close eye on them when they're lit, and don't leave the room without extinguishing the flames. Never put a lit candle on a tree.

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