

# *Make Safety a Tradition*



**Holiday Safety Community Toolkit**  
**Winter 2011**

# Campaign Introduction

Each year, the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) launches a holiday safety awareness campaign to encourage families and communities across the country to *Make Safety a Tradition* of the winter holiday season.

The 2011 *Make Safety a Tradition* campaign encompasses all aspects of holiday safety, with the overarching theme of children's safety. The holiday season is a particularly magical time of year for children. It's only natural for them to be drawn to the festive lights and colorful decorations that festoon homes and public places throughout the season. Unfortunately, childhood curiosity combined with common holiday traditions can be a recipe for disaster. The campaign's unique resources provide safety information to help families – with members of all ages – “*play it safe*” and prevent holiday hazards related to decorating, cooking, fires, and more.

## How to Use this Toolkit

Advanced planning and a proactive approach to safety are essential to keeping family, friends, and guests safe during all of their holiday activities.

In this toolkit, you will find a collection of new and updated safety materials to help you *Make Safety a Tradition* of the holiday season. Included safety tip sheets cover all aspects of holiday safety, from cooking, decorating, and entertaining to post-holiday clean-up. You will also find a Holiday Entertaining Safety Checklist, information about the latest advances in home safety technology, and easy safety reminders for the whole family.

Would you like to help spread the message of holiday safety in your community, company, school or social group? Check out ESFI's *Make Safety a Tradition Community Outreach Kit* for instructions and additional campaign tools, including press release templates, newsletter articles, and social media outreach ideas.

Additional print, video, and multimedia resources are also featured on ESFI's seasonal website at [www.holidaysafety.org](http://www.holidaysafety.org).



## Who is ESFI?

The Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) is the premier non-profit organization dedicated to promoting electrical safety at home, at school, and in the workplace. We engage in public education campaigns throughout the year to reduce the numbers of electrically-related fires, fatalities, injuries, and property loss.

## *Proven Need for Holiday Safety Awareness*

While the winter holiday season is traditionally a festive time of year filled with colorful decorations and family gatherings, it is too often a time of tragedy and loss as well. National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) statistics indicate that 30% of all home fires and 38% of home fire deaths occur during the months of December, January, and February. These winter fires result from a variety of sources. According to reports from the United States Fire Administration (USFA), incidence of fires caused by cooking, heating, and open flame all increase during the winter holiday period. USFA also notes that winter holiday fires are more severe than the average fire during the year across all loss measures. Holiday decoration and Christmas tree fires, in particular, are substantially more damaging than other fires. These fires result in twice the injuries and five times the fatalities per fire as the average winter holiday home fire. During 2004-2008, an average of 260 home fires each year started with Christmas trees. Another 150 home fires per year were caused by decorative and holiday lights.

Fire is not the only danger facing families during the holiday season. Injuries resulting from falls are a serious concern this time of year as well. About 5,800 individuals are treated annually in hospital emergency rooms for injuries sustained from falls involving holiday decorations. In addition, 4,000 people a year are treated in emergency rooms for injuries associated with extension cords. Half of these injuries involve fractures, lacerations, contusions, or sprains as a result of people tripping over the cords.

The risk of poisonings also increases during the holiday period, resulting not only from common household items, but also carbon monoxide (CO). The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) reports that in 2007 the majority of CO deaths occurred in the colder months of November through February.

Fortunately, holiday home fires, fatalities, and injuries are most often preventable. ESFi strives to increase awareness of holiday hazards so that they may be identified and corrected before a holiday tragedy can occur.



Visit [www.holidaysafety.org](http://www.holidaysafety.org) for more holiday safety resources.



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***Make Safety a Tradition  
of the holiday season!***

Visit [www.holidaysafety.org](http://www.holidaysafety.org) for more holiday safety resources.

# Holiday Cooking Safety

**The kitchen is the heart of the home. It's where families gather to cook favorite recipes, share warm meals, and reconnect with each other, especially during the holidays. Unfortunately, it's also where two of every five reported home fires start.**

**Take steps to protect your home and family from cooking hazards:**

- Never leave cooking equipment unattended. Turn off burners if you have to leave the room.
- Supervise children closely in the kitchen.
- Prevent fires by making sure your stovetop and oven are clean and free of grease and dust.
- Clean the exhaust hood and duct over the stove regularly.
- Keep the cooking area around the stove/oven clear of combustibles, such as towels, napkins, and pot holders.
- Wear short or close-fitting sleeves. Loose clothing can catch fire.
- To protect from spills and burns, use the back burners and turn the pot handles in, away from reaching hands.
- Locate all appliances away from the sink.
- Plug countertop appliances into Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI)-protected outlets.
- Keep appliance cords away from hot surfaces like the range or toaster.
- Unplug the toaster and other countertop appliances when not in use.
- Be sure to turn off all appliances when cooking is completed.

## *Fast Facts:*

- **Cooking equipment is the leading cause of reported home fires and injuries. It is also the leading cause of unreported home fires.**
- **During 2004-2008, U.S. fire departments responded to an average of 154,700 home cooking fires each year.**
- **Unattended cooking equipment is the leading cause of home cooking fires.**



Visit [www.holidaysafety.org](http://www.holidaysafety.org) for more holiday safety resources.

# Cooking Safely With Kids

**Cooking is an important part of holiday celebrations for many families, and children love to be a part of it. Take steps to keep them safe in the kitchen this holiday:**

- Watch children closely in the kitchen. They must be supervised at all times when an electric or gas stove is within reach.
- Never leave the kitchen when something's cooking. A fire or accident can happen in an instant.
- Keep children at least three feet away from all cooking appliances.
- Never hold a child while cooking or when removing hot food from the microwave, oven or stove.
- Turn pot handles in, away from reaching hands.
- Use the back burners on the cooktop whenever possible.
- Hot tap water scalds can be prevented by lowering the setting on water heater thermostats to 120 degrees Fahrenheit or below and by installing anti-scald devices in water faucets.
- Once your holiday meal is ready, check that the stove and oven are turned off and that other kitchen appliances are unplugged and out of reach.



## *Fast Facts:*

- In the U.S., injury is the leading cause of death among children and young adults, and nearly half of these accidents occur in the home.
- In 2009, ranges and ovens were involved in an estimated 17,300 thermal burn injuries seen in U.S. hospital emergency rooms. 36% of these burn victims were under the age of five.
- Two out of every five reported home fires started in the kitchen or cooking area.
- Children under five years old are almost one and a half times more likely to die in a home fire as the average person.

Visit [www.holidaysafety.org](http://www.holidaysafety.org) for more holiday safety resources.

**While decorative lights and other electrical decorations add to the splendor of the season, they can increase the risks of fire and electrical injuries if not used safely.**

**Follow these basic safety guidelines to help prevent serious electrical and fire hazards as you decorate your home and yard this season:**

## **Candles:**

- Avoid using candles when possible. Consider using battery-operated candles in place of traditional candles.
- If you choose to light candles, place them away from combustible items, such as decorations and wrapping paper.
- Take care to place candle displays in locations where they cannot be knocked over.
- Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other greenery.
- Never leave an open flame unattended. Keep burning candles within sight.
- Do not leave pets unattended in rooms that contain lit candles or decorations.
- Extinguish all candles before you leave the room, go to bed or leave the house.

## **Christmas Trees:**

- When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness. A fresh tree will stay green longer and be less of a fire hazard than a dry tree.
- Because heated rooms dry out live trees rapidly, be sure to keep the stand filled with water.
- When purchasing an artificial tree, look for the label "Fire Resistant." This label indicates that the tree is more resistant to burning.
- Don't use electrical ornaments or light strings on artificial trees with metallic leaves or branch coverings.
- Place your tree at least 3 feet away from all heat sources, including fireplaces, radiators, and space heaters.
- When trimming a tree, only use non-combustible or flame-resistant materials.

## Lights and Electrical Decorations:

- Always purchase electrical decorations and lights from reputable retailers that you trust.
- Before decorating, determine how many outlets are available and where they are located. Plan your displays accordingly.
- Avoid overloading electrical outlets with too many decorations or electrical devices. They can overheat and cause a fire.
- Carefully inspect each electrical decoration. Cracked or frayed sockets, loose or bare wires, and loose connections may cause a serious shock or start a fire.
- Use lights approved for safe use by a nationally recognized testing laboratory.
- Follow the manufacturer's use and care instructions that accompany electrical decorations.
- Never connect more than three strands of incandescent lights together.
- Consider purchasing LED lights, which use less energy and run cooler than traditional incandescent lights.
- Do not mount or support light strings in a way that might damage the cord's insulation.
- Always unplug electrical decorations before replacing bulbs or fuses.
- Turn off and unplug all decorations before leaving the house or going to sleep.

### Fast Facts:

- Christmas tree and holiday decoration fires result in twice the injuries and five times more fatalities per fire than the average winter holiday fire.
- 45% of home decoration fires start with candles.
- On average 260 home fires begin with Christmas trees each year, resulting in 12 deaths, 24 injuries, and \$16.4 million in property damage.
- Roughly 5,800 people per year are treated in hospital emergency rooms for falls associated with holiday decorations. More than half of these injuries were caused by falls from ladders or roofs.



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Visit [www.holidaysafety.org](http://www.holidaysafety.org) for more holiday safety resources.

**The importance of decorating safety doesn't stop at the front door. There are a few additional points to keep in mind when decorating outdoors:**

## **Lights and Electrical Decorations:**

- Make sure all products, including extension cords, are marked for outdoor use.
- Always use a GFCI-protected outlet outdoors.
- Inspect all lights, decorations, and extension cords for damage before using.
- Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, the house, or other firm supports to protect them from wind damage, but take care not to attach the lights in a way that could damage the cord's insulation.
- Keep all extension cords and light strings clear of snow and standing water.
- Make sure spotlights used to illuminate decorations are well-ventilated, protected from weather, and a safe distance from flammable items.

## **Ladders:**

- Inspect ladders for loose or missing screws, hinges, bolts, and nuts before using.
- Exercise caution when decorating near power lines. Keep yourself and your equipment at least 10 feet from power lines.
- Use wooden or fiberglass ladders when decorating outdoors. Metal ladders conduct electricity.
- Use the right ladder height, ensuring ladders extend at least three feet past the edge of the roof.



## **Safety Spotlight:**

### **Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs)**

**A ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) is a device designed to protect people from electrical shock and electrocution. The GFCI constantly monitors electricity flowing in a circuit, quickly switching off power to that circuit if any loss of current occurs.**

**GFCI receptacles are used in place of standard outlets in areas of the home where water may come into contact with electrical products, such as the bathroom, garage, kitchen, and basement.**

**GFCIs should be tested every month to ensure they are in working order.**

Visit [www.holidaysafety.org](http://www.holidaysafety.org) for more holiday safety resources.

# Decorating Safely with Kids

**Children are extremely curious, and their curiosity only intensifies during the holidays when homes sparkle with beautiful decorations. Make their safety a priority when decorating your home this holiday season to ensure that this celebratory time of year does not end in tragedy.**

**Follow these quick tips from ESFi:**

- Read manufacturer's instructions and warning labels for any decoration that will be used around young children, like electronic trains or animatronic dolls. Note if it is appropriate for their age group and determine whether adult supervision is required; plan accordingly.
- Keep candles, matches, and lighters out of reach.
- Never leave children unsupervised when candles are lit.
- Instead of traditional candles, try using battery-operated candles so you can avoid the hazards associated with open flames.
- Strings of lights and garland are staples of holiday decorating, but they can also pose a strangulation hazard. They should never be used as playthings.
- In homes with small children, try to avoid using decorations that are sharp or breakable. Otherwise, remember to place glass and breakable ornaments out of the reach of small children.
- Avoid putting Christmas tree lights, ornaments, metal hooks, and other small, "mouth-sized" decorations near the ground or on lower limbs where they may be easily reached by young children.
- Holly berries, wax fruits, and other decorating items also present choking hazards. Remember to keep this in mind when arranging your decorations.
- Cover any unused outlets on extension cords with plastic caps or electrical tape to prevent children from coming in contact with the live circuit.
- Place electrical cords out of the reach of small children.
- Never allow children to play with lights, electrical decorations or cords.



## *Fast Facts:*

- In 2004-2008, an estimated 1,170 home fires began with decorations, excluding Christmas trees.
- Christmas, Christmas Eve, and New Year's Day are the top 3 days of the year for candle fires.

Visit [www.holidaysafety.org](http://www.holidaysafety.org) for more holiday safety resources.

# Extension Cord Safety

**Planning to deck your halls with festive lights and decorations this year? Chances are, you'll end up using an extension cord to help you.**

**While they are a convenient way to supply power right where you need it, they can also create hazards if not used safely.**

**Follow this simple guidance to avoid a decorating disaster:**

- Extension cords should only be used on a temporary basis.
- Make sure extension cords are properly rated for their intended use, indoor or outdoor, and meet or exceed the power needs of the appliance or device being used.
- Inspect cords for damage before use. Check for cracked or frayed sockets, loose or bare wires, and loose connections.
- Never use a cord that feels hot or is damaged in any way.
- Do not run extension cords through walls or ceilings. This may cause the cord to over-heat, creating a serious fire hazard.
- Do not nail or staple electrical cords to walls or baseboards.
- Make sure that cords are not pinched in doors, windows, or under heavy furniture, which could damage the cord's insulation.
- Keep extension cords out of high-traffic areas like doorways or walkways where they pose a tripping hazard.
- Insert plugs fully so that no part of the prongs is exposed when the extension cord is in use.
- Ensure that all extension cords are certified by a nationally recognized testing laboratory such as UL, CSA, or ETL, and read the manufacturer's instructions.

## ***Fast Facts:***

- Each year, about 4,000 injuries associated with electric extension cords are treated in hospital emergency rooms. Half of these injuries involve fractures, lacerations, contusions, or sprains from people tripping over extension cords.
- Roughly 3,300 home fires originate in extension cords each year, killing 50 people and injuring about 270 more.



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# *Buyer Beware: Counterfeit Electrical Products*

**Every day, counterfeit electrical products are finding their way into our homes, businesses, and public institutions. Unlike fake handbags, watches, or designer apparel, these counterfeits pose significant safety hazards.**

**Follow these guidelines to help identify counterfeit electrical products:**

- **Purchase electrical products from a reputable retailer that you trust.** Avoid deep discount stores, flea markets, or bargain warehouses.
- **Exercise extreme caution in online transactions. Do your homework when conducting business online.** Be especially wary of purchasing electrical products from unknown companies or unauthorized sellers.
- **Check for certification marks.** Look for certification marks from nationally recognized testing laboratories such as UL, CSA, and ETL.
- **Scrutinize product labels and packaging.** Make sure that labels and packaging are free of grammatical errors and that any information is consistent with information elsewhere on the package.
- **Avoid products that lack any identifying brand label or affiliation.** Make sure that the name and contact information of the manufacturer is clearly displayed on the packaging and/or the product.
- **Trust your instincts.** Beware of bargains that seem too good to be true. Counterfeiters often use inferior materials and avoid key manufacturing steps to reduce the cost of their products significantly.
- **Be Proactive.** Organizations such as the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and Underwriters Laboratories (UL) provide up-to-date information about product recalls on their websites.

## ***Fast Facts:***

- **The CPSC has recalled more than one million counterfeit electrical products in recent years, including extension cords, power strips, batteries, and hair dryers.**
- **In FY 2010, consumer electronics accounted for 18% of counterfeits seized by U.S. customs, ranking second after footwear.**

## ***What is Electrical Counterfeiting?***

Counterfeit electrical products can be difficult to spot. They may appear to be identical to their legitimate counterparts, but these products are often made using inferior materials and without normal safety provisions. These unsubstantiated products could be a knock-off version of a name-brand item, one that bears an unauthorized certification mark or a product where visible defects are apparent. Left undetected, these defective products can cause fire, shock, and electrocution.

Visit [www.holidaysafety.org](http://www.holidaysafety.org) for more holiday safety resources.

**Keep young holiday visitors safe by taking steps to prepare your home before they arrive:**

- If your home is not already “childproofed,” install Tamper Resistant Receptacles or use safety covers on all unused electrical outlets, including those on extension cords.
- Store breakables, candles, matches, and other potentially dangerous items, such as household and personal care products, medicines, vitamins, and pesticides, in inaccessible or locked areas.
- Don't forget to put away small items, like buttons, coins, and jewelry, which are a choking hazard.
- Use safety gates at the top and bottom of stairways to keep babies and toddlers safe.
- Consider turning your water heater down to 120 degrees Fahrenheit to reduce the risk of scalding.
- Do not use space heaters in rooms where children will be unsupervised.
- Adult supervision is required in the kitchen when something is cooking or when a range or stove is within reach.
- Keep children at least three feet away from cooking appliances.
- Decorations are not toys. Never allow children to play with electrical decorations or cords. Place cords out of reach.
- Avoid putting Christmas tree lights, ornaments, metal hooks, and other small decorations near the ground or on the lower limbs where they may be reached by young children.
- In homes with small children, take special care to avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable.
- Keep matches, lighters, and candle displays out of reach of children.

## *Safety Spotlight:*

### **Tamper Resistant Receptacles (TRRs)**

Every year in the United States, more than 2,400 children under 10 years of age are treated in hospital emergency rooms for electric shock or burn injuries caused by tampering with a wall outlet.

Tamper resistant receptacle (TRR) technology provides a simple, permanent solution to help prevent these types of childhood injuries.

TRRs look like standard wall outlets, but they are actually designed with spring-loaded receptacle cover plates that close off the receptacle openings unless equal pressure is simultaneously applied to both sides.

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# Electrical Gifts for Children

**One common holiday tradition is the giving of gifts to family and friends. When selecting electrical gifts for children, it is important to keep a few safety-focused tips in mind:**

- Electrical toys and other electrical devices intended for use by children can be extremely hazardous if improperly used or used without proper supervision.
- An adult should supervise the use of any electrical product. Consider both the maturity of the child and the nature of the toy when deciding how much supervision is required.
- Do not buy an electrical toy, or any toy, for a child too young to use it safely. Always check the age recommendation on the package. Remember that this is a minimum age recommendation. The buyer must still take into account an individual child's capabilities.
- Never give any child under ten years old a toy that must be plugged into an electrical outlet. Instead, choose toys that are battery-operated.
- Make sure all electrical toys bear a fire safety label from an independent testing laboratory.
- Read the instructions accompanying the product carefully, and then review them with any child who will be using the product.
- Inspect all electrical toys periodically. Repair, replace, or discard deteriorating toys.
- Don't allow children to play with electrical toys near water, and make sure they understand that water and electricity don't mix.
- All electrical toys should be put away immediately after use in a dry storage area out of the reach of younger children.

## *Fast Facts:*

- Each year, there is an estimated average of 60 electrocutions associated with consumer products.
- According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), 70% of child-related electrical accidents occur at home, when adult supervision is present.



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# Smoke Alarm Safety Tips

**Smoke alarms save lives. Follow this simple guidance to ensure that your home is adequately protected by working, properly installed smoke alarms.**

## **Installation Tips:**

- Smoke alarms should be installed in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area, and on every level of the home.
- For optimal protection, smoke alarms should be interconnected, so that they all sound if one sounds. Manufacturers are now producing battery-operated alarms that are interconnected by wireless technology.
- Combination smoke alarms that include both ionization and photoelectric alarms offer the most comprehensive protection. An ionization alarm is more responsive to flames, while a photoelectric alarm is more responsive to a smoldering fire.
- Hardwired smoke alarms with battery backups are considered to be more reliable than those operated solely by batteries.
- Purchase smoke alarms from a reputable retailer that you trust.
- Choose alarms that bear the label of a nationally recognized testing laboratory.
- Install smoke alarms at least 10 feet from cooking appliances to reduce the possibility of nuisance alarms.
- Alarms installed between 10 and 20 feet of a cooking appliance must have a hush feature to temporarily reduce the alarm sensitivity or must be a photoelectric alarm.
- If possible, alarms should be mounted in the center of a ceiling. If mounted on a wall, they should be located 6 to 12 inches below the ceiling.
- Avoid locating alarms near bathrooms, heating appliances, windows or ceiling fans.

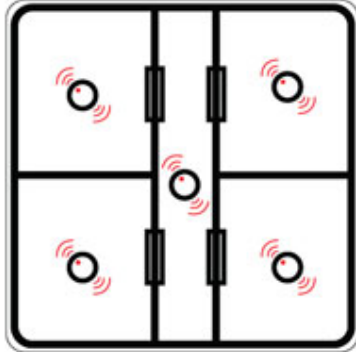
## **Maintenance Tips:**

- Smoke alarms should be tested once a month by pressing the TEST button.
- Smoke alarm batteries should be replaced in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, at least once a year. If an alarm "chirps" or "beeps" to indicate low batteries, they should be replaced immediately.
- Occasionally dust or lightly vacuum the exterior of the alarm to remove dust and cobwebs.
- Smoke alarms should be replaced in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, at least every ten years.
- Never paint over a smoke alarm.

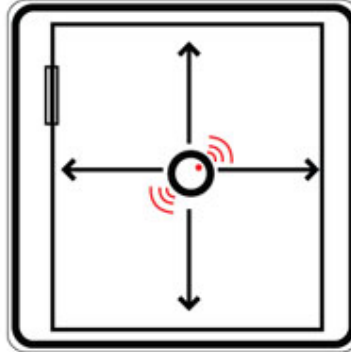
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# Smoke Alarm Safety Tips



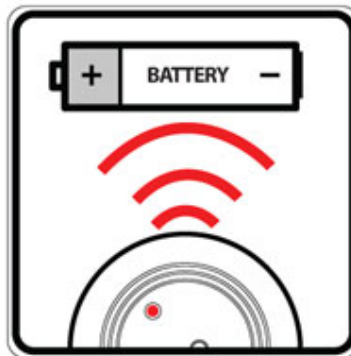
Install smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area, and on every level of the home.



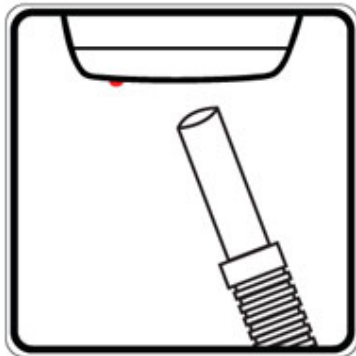
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Smoke alarms should be tested once a month by pressing the TEST button.



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Occasionally dust or lightly vacuum the exterior of the alarm to remove dust and cobwebs.



Smoke alarms should be replaced at least every ten years.

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# Seasonal Fire Safety

***There's no place like home for the holidays and no better place to implement good fire safety practices. Follow these simple steps to help ensure your holiday is memorable for all the right reasons:***

- Make sure your home is protected by an adequate number of smoke alarms. Alarms should be installed on every level of the home, inside each bedroom, and outside each sleeping area.
- Test smoke alarms monthly to ensure they are working properly. Change the batteries at least once a year.
- Carefully inspect each electrical decoration and extension cord before use. Discard any damaged items.
- Avoid overloading electrical outlets, which can overheat and start a fire.
- If you purchase a live Christmas tree, check for freshness. Be sure to keep the stand filled with water.
- Place your tree and all decorations at least three feet away from heat sources.
- Consider using battery-operated candles instead of traditional candles. Never use burning candles on or near your tree.
- Turn off all decorations and extinguish candles before leaving the house or going to sleep.
- Never leave the kitchen when something is cooking.
- Have your heating system cleaned and inspected by a qualified professional at least once a year.
- Keep space heaters at least three feet away from anything that can burn, such as bedding, curtains, clothing, and paper.
- Turn space heaters off when you leave the room or go to sleep.

## ***Fast Facts:***

- **Almost two-thirds of home fire deaths resulted from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms.**
- **Children under five years old are almost one and a half times more likely to die in a home fire as the average person.**
- **The peak months for home fires that cause child casualties are December through February.**



Visit [www.holidaysafety.org](http://www.holidaysafety.org) for more holiday safety resources.

# Space Heater Safety Tips

**As the temperature drops during the winter holiday season, many families turn to alternative heat sources, such as space heaters, to help warm their homes. Many are unaware that the risk of fire from space heaters is 3 to 4 times higher than from central heating equipment.**

**Follow these simple precautions to keep your home safe and warm this winter:**

- Choose a heater that bears the mark of a nationally recognized testing laboratory.
- Read the manufacturer's instruction manual before using any space heater.
- Check the cord before plugging in the heater. If frayed, worn or damaged, do not use the heater.
- Do not use space heaters with extension cords. Plug them directly into an outlet on an unburdened circuit.
- Keep space heaters at least 3 feet away from anything that can catch fire, such as bedding, curtains, furniture, clothing, and paper.
- Place space heaters on level, flat surfaces. Never place heaters on cabinets, tables or furniture.
- Do not use a space heater in damp or wet areas unless it is specifically designed for use outdoors or in bathrooms.
- Keep space heaters out of high-traffic and exit areas.
- Space heaters are meant to supply supplemental heat. Do not use them to warm bedding, cook food, dry clothing or thaw pipes.
- Make certain the circuit into which you plug a space heater can adequately and safely handle the added demand.
- Never leave a space heater unattended. Turn heaters off when you go to sleep or leave the room.
- Turn off, unplug, and safely store portable space heaters when not in use.
- Don't use space heaters in rooms where children are unsupervised.

## ***Fast Facts:***

- Heating equipment is the second leading cause of home fires.
- 32% of home heating fires and 82% of home heating fire deaths are caused by space heaters.

Visit [www.holidaysafety.org](http://www.holidaysafety.org) for more holiday safety resources.

# *Holiday Entertaining Safety Checklist*

**Use the tips on this checklist to ensure that your home is ready for all of the festive activities the holiday season brings.**

## **Fire Safety**

- ❑ Test your smoke alarms monthly and make sure that your house is protected by an adequate number of working alarms.
- ❑ Smoke alarms should be located inside each bedroom, outside each sleeping area, and on every level of your home.
- ❑ Share your fire escape plan, including the location of your outside meeting place, with your overnight guests. Everyone should know at least two ways out of each room in your home.
- ❑ Keep halls, stairs, and doorways properly illuminated and free of clutter and other objects that could hinder an escape during a fire emergency.
- ❑ Check to make sure your stairs, halls, and entries are properly illuminated. Use nightlights in hallways and bathrooms.
- ❑ Consider having older guests or those with mobility issues sleep on the ground floor of the house.

## **Decorating Safety**

- ❑ Avoid overloading electrical outlets, which can overheat and cause a fire.
- ❑ Do not place extension cords where they could cause a tripping hazard, like doorways.
- ❑ Do not run extension cords under rugs or furniture.
- ❑ Keep all decorations 3 feet away from heating sources, including space heaters and fireplaces.
- ❑ Keep young visitors in mind. Place breakables, candles, and other potentially dangerous items out of their reach.
- ❑ Turn off and unplug all decorations before leaving home or going to sleep.
- ❑ Use only weatherproof electrical devices for outside activities. Protect outdoor electrical devices from moisture.

## **Heating Equipment Safety**

- ❑ Have your heating system inspected annually by a licensed, qualified professional.
- ❑ Use space heaters properly and safely. Keep them out of high-traffic and exit areas, and at least 3 feet from anything that can burn.
- ❑ Do not leave a space heater running unattended. Turn space heaters off and unplug them when you leave the room or go to sleep.
- ❑ Never leave an open flame, including the fireplace, unattended.



## Child Safety

- ❑ Put small items that could pose a choking hazard, like buttons, coins, and jewelry, away if you are hosting young children.
- ❑ Use safety gates at the top and bottom of stairways to keep babies and toddlers safe.
- ❑ Move all cleaning products and other dangerous items out of reach of children and store them in a locked area.
- ❑ Consider turning your water heater temperature down to 120 degrees Fahrenheit to reduce the risk of scalding.
- ❑ In homes with young children, install tamper resistant receptacles to prevent electrical shocks and burns, or use safety covers on all unused outlets that are accessible to children.
- ❑ Never allow children to play with electrical decorations or cords.

## Electrical Safety

- ❑ Test ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) and arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs) to ensure that they are working properly.
- ❑ Consider adding new safety technology like tamper resistant receptacles (TRRs) or AFCIs if you are having electrical system maintenance or upgrades performed.
- ❑ Outdoor outlets should be protected with GFCI technology to reduce the risk of electric shock.
- ❑ Avoid overloading electrical outlets. Check outlets regularly for problems, including overheating, loose connections, reversed polarity, and corrosion.

## Cooking Safety

- ❑ Never leave cooking equipment unattended.
- ❑ Keep children at least 3 feet away from cooking appliances.
- ❑ Keep towels, pot holders, and curtains away from hot surfaces.
- ❑ Wear short or close-fitting sleeves. Loose clothing can catch fire.

Visit [www.holidaysafety.org](http://www.holidaysafety.org) for more holiday safety resources.



## Quick Reference Guide: Home Safety Technology



### Arc Fault Circuit Interrupters (AFCIs)

An arc fault is a dangerous electrical problem caused by damaged, overheated, or stressed electrical wiring or devices. Arcing faults are one of the major causes of the more than 51,000 electrical fires that occur each year in the United States.

Arc fault circuit interrupters, or AFCIs, are devices that replace standard circuit breakers in your home's electrical service panel. AFCIs provide a higher level of electrical fire protection, detecting hazardous arcing conditions and shutting down the electricity before a fire can start.

While AFCIs were originally only required to protect bedroom circuits, the *2011 National Electrical Code (NEC)* requires that this technology be installed in additional areas of the home, including dining rooms and living rooms. Although the new safety requirements apply to newly constructed homes, older homes with aging wiring systems can also benefit from the added protection provided by AFCIs.

AFCIs should only be installed or replaced by a licensed, qualified electrician. Test AFCIs monthly to make sure they are in proper working order.



### Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs)

A ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) is a device designed to protect people from electric shock and electrocution. A GFCI constantly monitors electricity flowing in a circuit. If it senses any loss of current, it quickly switches off power to that circuit. Installing GFCIs could prevent over two-thirds of electrocutions that occur each year in and around the home.

GFCIs can be installed at the main service panel or in place of standard electrical outlets; they can also be used as portable devices. Typically, GFCIs are installed in areas where water and electricity are in close proximity, such as the bathroom, garage, kitchen, and basement.

Portable GFCIs require no tools to install and provide flexibility in using receptacles that are not GFCI-protected. They are commonly used outdoors.

GFCIs can be damaged or wear out as a result of voltage surges from lightning, utility switching or normal usage. Just because an outlet works does not mean that the GFCI is functioning properly. GFCIs should be tested monthly to ensure they are in working condition.

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### **Tamper Resistant Receptacles (TRRs)**

Every year in the United States, more than 2,400 children under ten years of age are treated in hospital emergency rooms for electric shock or burns caused by tampering with a wall outlet around the home.

Tamper resistant receptacle (TRR) technology provides a simple, permanent solution to help prevent these childhood injuries. TRRs replace standard wall outlets and may appear identical on the outside, but they are designed with spring-loaded receptacle cover plates that close off the receptacle openings or slots. When equal pressure is simultaneously applied to both sides the receptacle cover plates open, allowing a standard plug to make contact with the receptacle contact points. Without this simultaneous pressure, the cover plates remain closed to prevent children from inserting household items.

Tamper resistant receptacles have proven to be so effective that the *2011 National Electrical Code (NEC)* requires installation of TRRs in all new homes. Standard outlets in existing homes can easily be replaced with TRRs. TRRs should be installed by a licensed, qualified electrician using the same installation guidelines that apply to standard receptacles.



### **Carbon Monoxide (CO) Alarms**

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a poisonous gas that can be created by fuel-burning heating and cooking appliances, portable generators, water heaters, clothes dryers, or cars left running in enclosed areas. This odorless, colorless, tasteless gas is often called the “silent killer” because it is virtually undetectable without the use of technology, like a CO alarm.

CO alarms should be installed on every level of your home and outside each sleeping area. Test CO alarms at least once a month by pressing the TEST button. CO alarm batteries should be replaced in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions, at least once a year. If an alarm “chirps” or “beeps” to indicate low batteries, they should be replaced immediately.



### **Smoke Alarms**

Smoke alarms save lives by providing early warning of fire. Roughly two-thirds of home fire deaths occur in homes without working smoke alarms.

Smoke alarms should be installed in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area, and on every level of the home.

Newer smoke alarm technologies provide greater levels of protection than ever before. Combination alarms with ionization and photoelectric sensors respond to both flaming and smoldering fires. Interconnected alarms offer the best protection. They all sound if one sounds. Battery-operated alarms can now be connected by wireless technology.

Test smoke alarms monthly by pushing the TEST button. Change smoke alarm batteries at least once a year. If an alarm “chirps” or “beeps” to indicate low batteries, change them right away. Replace all smoke alarms at least every 10 years.