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## Don't let decorations spark a tragedy

The December holidays are a time of celebration and joy. A fire can ruin everything, though, with tragic consequences.

Keep your family, friends, and home safe during the holidays by watching out for these sources of danger:

- Live trees. A fresh tree is less of a fire hazard. Pick one that's green, with needles that are difficult to pull off and don't break when you bend them. The trunk should still be sticky with resin. Tap the trunk on the ground to see how many needles fall off. If you see a lot, keep looking.
- Artificial trees. Check to be sure they're marked "fire resistant." Place your tree—live or artificial—clear of traffic in your house, and a safe distance from heaters, radiators, and the fireplace.
- Lights. Take a look at light strings before hanging them on your tree. Look for frayed wiring, broken sockets, or loose connections. When hanging lights outdoors, make sure they're certified for outdoor use. Don't plug more than three standard strings of lights into a single extension cord. Check the wires regularly, and if they feel warm, turn them off and replace the string. And remember to turn all holiday lights off before going to bed or leaving the house.
- Candles. Don't place lighted candles on your tree, nor close to it. Place them in spots where they won't be knocked or blown over. Be sure to use holders that are nonflammable. If children are participating in any candle-lighting ceremonies in your home, supervise them closely.
- Smoke alarms. Test your home's smoke alarms, and replace batteries as needed.