

Remember to play it safe during the holidays

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With all its joy and family gatherings, the holiday season brings a special set of hazards.

By following the Ontario Real Estate Association's holiday checklist, you'll be alerted to potential problems and be free to enjoy the season's celebrations.

When purchasing outdoor lighting, but only equipment which has been designated for outdoor use. Look for the CSA mark for protection from fire and shock hazards.

When working with outdoor wiring, be sure to turn off the electricity and use only electrical cords designed for exposure to weather.

Run the cords above the ground, if possible draped over wooden stakes high enough to keep them out of puddles and snow.

Do not use metallic fastening devices, such as nails or tacks, to hold strings of outdoor lights in place.

Use insulated tape

Use insulated tape to attach electrical cords to buildings. And be careful not to tape the cords over or along metal eavestroughs or to pierce the wire insulation.

You can also purchase outdoor lights which have special fasteners that clip onto gutters.

Tape all plug connections with plastic

From Christmas trees to lights, there are many hazards to consider

electrical tape making them as watertight as possible. To prevent moisture from entering the bulb sockets, make sure the bulb is facing the ground. All outdoor lighting should be plugged into ground fault protected circuits.

Outdoor Christmas lights are not designed to be left out all year. They should be brought in after the season is over and carefully inspected before being stored for the following year.

Before using any indoor lights or electric decoration, check that cords are not frayed and that they do not have exposed wires, loose connections or broken sockets. If you find any defects, replace the old sets.

Be sure to check that bulb reflectors have insulation consisting of either plastic or another non-metallic material placed between the lamp and the metal part of the reflector.

Reflectors which fit around the bulb require CSA certification and are often sold with the Christmas light string.

Do not plug lights into circuits already

burdened with lamps and appliances. If a normal circuit cannot take several sets of tree lights, do not replace the fuse with one of a higher amperage.

Extension cords should never be walked on or run under a rug, and place them so they do not present a tripping hazard.

Do not coil or bunch an extension cord as it may cause overheating and don't allow a cord to become trapped under appliances or heavy furniture which might result in crushing the cord.

Empty bulb sockets

Never leave a bulb socket empty for small fingers to explore. Always turn off Christmas lights before going to bed, leaving the house or any time there is no one around to check them.

If you buy a Christmas tree, make sure it is fresh. A dried out tree is a fire hazard. A fresh tree will bounce off the ground on its trunk without losing many needles.

You can keep your tree fresh by placing it in a secure container filled with water or wet

sand. When deciding where to put your tree, keep in mind radiators and furnaces will dry it out. And never have an open flame, such as a candle near the tree.

Don't rely on spray-on flame retardants to guarantee safety. Similarly, adding stay-fresh products to a tree's water will not prolong the tree's life or make it less flammable.

A fire-resistant artificial tree is the safest one to buy.

You can decorate this tree with Christmas lights which are fire-proof providing they include the CSA label.

Avoid using lights on metal trees. The metal may cut through the cord to the wire, causing the tree to become electrically charged.

Lighted candles

Like Christmas trees, cut greens dry out quickly and become flammable, so use extreme care when combining greens with candles for decorations or centrepieces.

If using candles and greens together, never leave candles lit unless someone is keeping an eye on them.

By taking special care to avoid potential hazards, you'll be able to enjoy a happy and safe holiday season.

This article is provided by the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) for the benefit of consumers in the real estate market.

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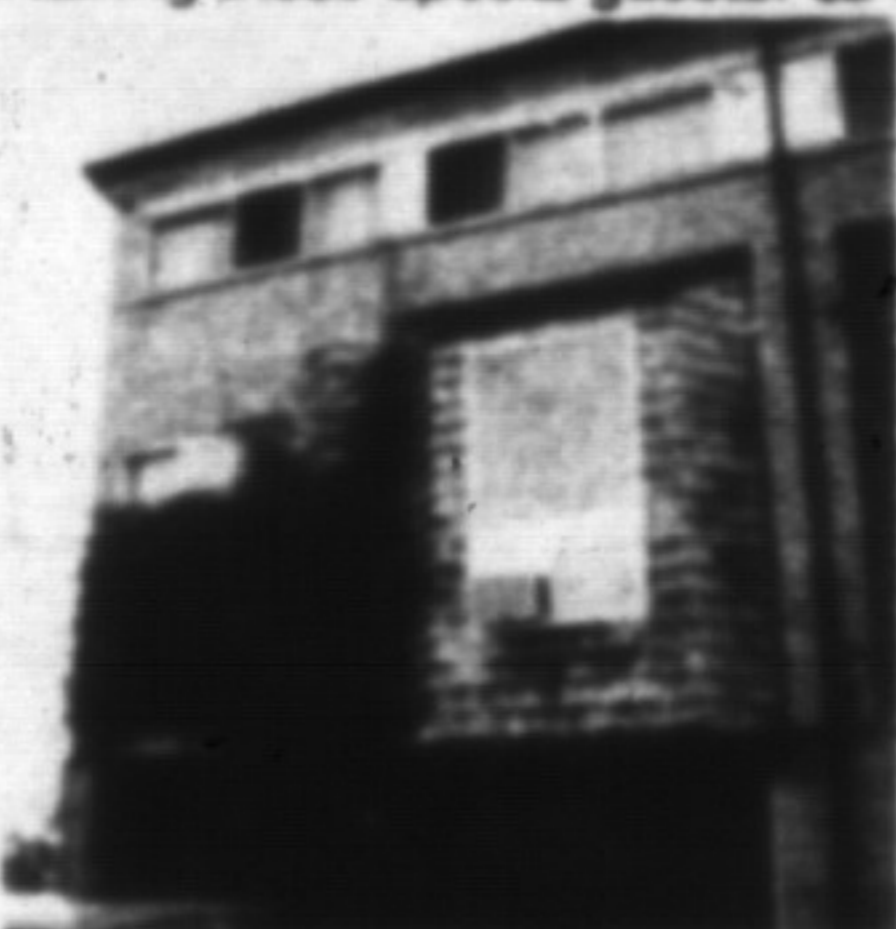
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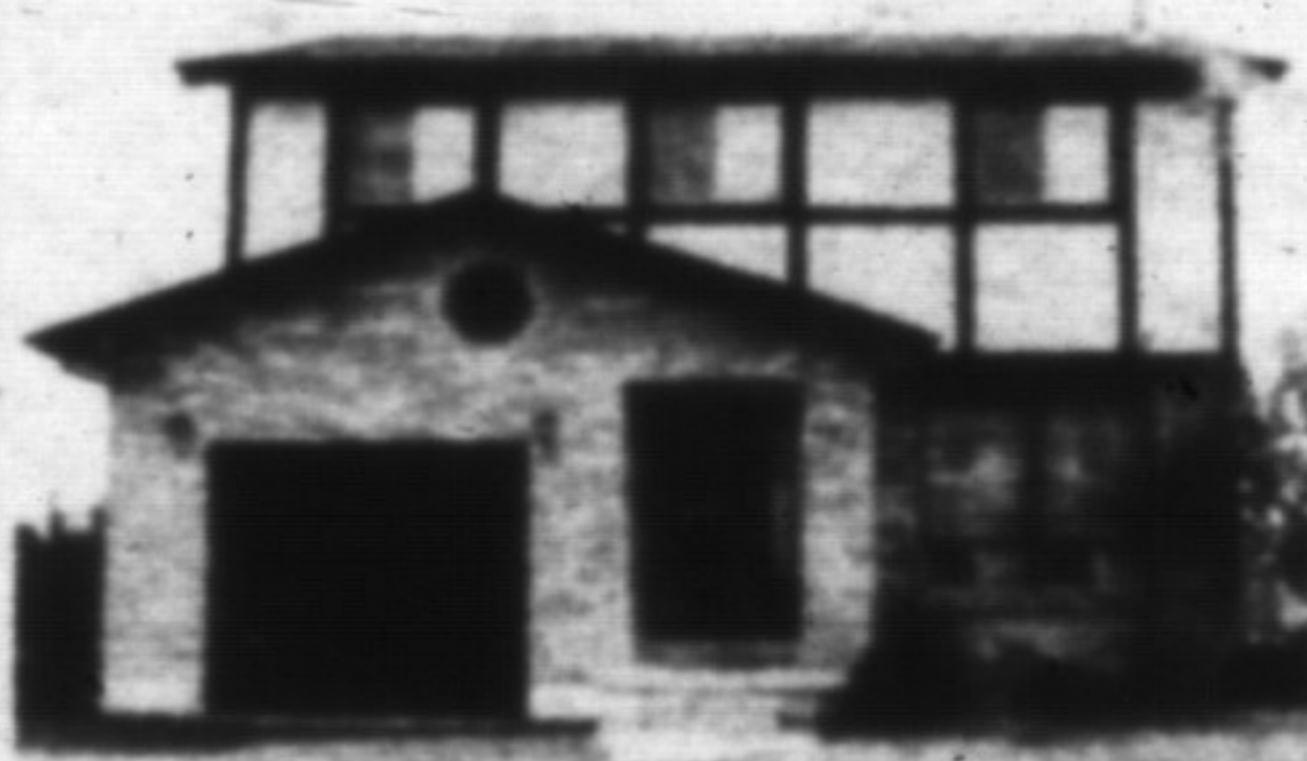
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