

Safety first when stringing holiday lights

Holiday decorations help make a special time of year even more memorable. Whether you're hanging mistletoe above a doorway or decking the halls, safety must be a priority when decorating a home for the holidays.

Accidents can happen no matter what type of holiday decorating you're doing, but stringing holiday lights around your home may be especially dangerous. This season, keep the following safety tips in mind when stringing lights so this season of celebration starts off safe and sound.

- **Work with at least one partner.** Never go it alone when stringing holiday lights. Make sure someone is there to hold the ladder steady as you climb up and down. Partnering up when stringing holiday lights allows decorators to use both of their hands to climb up ladders instead of using one of their hands to carry lights. Once they reach a point where it's safe to hang lights, they can then have a helper hand them the lights. If possible, work in groups of three so someone can hold the ladder steady at all times.
- **Inspect lights before hanging them.** Lights are not built to last forever, and over time holiday lights can suffer damage that has the potential to be dangerous. Wires can fray, and sockets can crack or break. Inspect lights and wires before hanging them, replacing any that pose a hazard. When replacing bulbs, be sure to replace them with bulbs of equal wattage.
- **Use an extension cord of adequate length.** Exterior holiday lights are often plugged into extension cords that extend to a shed or garage. Do

not connect several extension cords to power holiday lights; instead, use just a single cord that's lengthy enough to reach the outlet. Connecting extension cords is a fire hazard. In addition, make sure the amperage of the decorations matches the amperage rating of the extension cord, which can be found on the product label or possibly on the manufacturer's website. Make sure the extension cord is not plugged into the power source while you are hanging the lights.

- **Make sure lights do not pose a safety hazard inside.** Some people string holiday lights indoors as well. Lights might be hung on Christmas trees or along hallways. Such lights and the cords connecting them to power sources should never pose safety hazards, so make sure they are not lying on the floor. Staple lights to the wall and never place them beneath furniture or rugs. Lights can overheat when placed beneath rugs, and lights that are not properly secured to a wall can pose certain dangers, including being potential tripping hazards.
- **Hang the correct lights.** When stringing lights, make sure you hang lights designated as exterior or lights on the exterior of your home and those designated as interior lights inside your home. Hanging lights in the wrong places poses a fire hazard and creates additional safety concerns, so adhere to manufacturer instructions when stringing lights. Safety should reign supreme when stringing holiday lights around the house.

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