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ELECTRICAL SAFETY FACT SHEET

HOLIDAY SAFETY

With decorative lights, candles, and electronics being used in and around the home this holiday season, the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) wants to help keep families safe from fires and injuries. An electric shock or electrical fire could darken a family's festivities and lead to a holiday spent in an emergency room. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has found that about 12,500 people go to the emergency room each year due to holiday-related incidents, including electrical shocks involving holiday lights and decorations.

“There's no denying that light strings and other electrical decorations add color and sparkle to holiday festivities. Though even the most seasoned decorator can be injured while adorning their home,” says Michael Clendenin, Executive Director of the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI). “ESFI urges you to give the best gift to yourself and your loved ones: the gift of electrical safety.”

To help you avoid becoming an emergency room casualty this holiday season, ESFI offers the following electrical safety tips and precautions:

- Before you begin decorating, read and follow the manufacturer's instructions concerning installation and maintenance of all electrical decorations.
- Indoors and out, use only the lights and other electrical decorations that have been certified by a recognized independent testing laboratory such as UL, ETL or CSA.
- Outdoors, use only light and other electrical decorations certified for outdoor use.
- Carefully inspect each decoration before plugging into an outlet. Cracked sockets, frayed, loose or bare wires, and loose connections may cause a serious electric shock or start a fire. Replace damaged items with new decorations.
- Always unplug a light string or electrical decoration before replacing light bulbs or fuses.
- Don't mount or support light strings in any way that might damage the cord's wire insulation. Never nail or staple light strings or extension cords down.
- Practice this rule of thumb: Do not connect more than three push-in bulb light string sets together. Light strings with the screw-in bulbs should have no more than 50 bulbs connected together.
- Don't overload extension cords - it could cause the cord to overheat and start a fire. Use no more than three standard-size sets of lights per extension cord.
- Keep all outdoor extension cords and light strings clear of snow and standing water and well protected from weather.
- Use caution when putting up or taking down holiday lights near power lines. By swinging or tugging on a set of lights you could accidentally cause them to wrap around a high-voltage line, which could lead to electrocution.
- Don't allow children or pets to play with light strings, candle lights or other electrical decorations. Even small light decorations can produce a deadly shock if they are misused.
- Turn off all electrical light strings and decorations before leaving home or going to bed.
- Plug outdoor electric lights and decorations into circuits protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). Portable GFCIs can be purchased where electrical supplies are sold.