



State of Idaho

DIVISION OF BUILDING SAFETY

“ Building a Safer Idaho”

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Keep Safety in Mind When Stringing Christmas Lights

(Meridian, Idaho) . A house lit up with Christmas lights is a beautiful sight to behold. But stringing lights across your roof and around your home can be a safety hazard if you are not careful. So before you flip the switch to dazzle friends and family with your spectacular light show, take a few moments to run through a quick safety checklist.

Before you connect strands of lights, the Idaho Division of Building Safety (DBS) recommends you carefully check them for cracked cords, frayed ends or loose connections. If bulbs have burned out, replace them immediately, using the correct wattage bulbs.

Modern lights have fused plugs, preventing sparks in case of a short circuit. Discard strands of lights that don't have fuses and get a set of newer, safer lights.

Keep an eye on extension cords; they can overheat. Take time to occasionally touch-test the cord. If it's hot, unplug it. Tape down any ground-level extension cords to prevent people from tripping over them.

Don't use tacks, nails or screws to hang outdoor lights; they can pierce the cable and become electrified. Use insulated hooks instead.

If you run extension cords along the ground, elevate plugs and connectors with bricks or other non-conductive material to keep snow, water and debris out of connections. Plug outdoor lights into a ground fault circuit interrupter outlet to reduce the risk of shorts and shocks.

The combination of shorts in electrical lights and a tinder-dry tree can be deadly. The National Fire Protection Association and the U.S. Fire Administration report an estimated 240 home fires involving Christmas trees and another 150 home fires involving holiday lights and other decorative lighting occur each year. Together, these fires result in 21 deaths and \$25.2 million in direct property damage.

Keep your tree well-watered. Not only will it stay fresh and green, it may also keep your house from burning down.

Paying attention to these simple safety procedures will help ensure you and yours enjoy a safe holiday season.

If you have questions about electrical safety, feel free to call DBS at 1 800 955-3044.

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