



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Florida Municipal Electric Association Urges Consumers to Put Safety First this Holiday Season

Helpful Tips for Holiday Electrical Safety

(Tallahassee, Fla.) – During this most wonderful time of the year, displaying holiday lights and decorations is a time-honored tradition for spreading good cheer. But celebrating the season with all the trimmings can also ring in unwanted safety hazards.

Each year during the winter holidays, hospital emergency rooms treat about 10,000 people for injuries from falls, decorations used improperly, faulty or worn electrical wires, and Christmas tree fires and shocks from holiday lights plugged into overloaded outlets. In fact, the National Fire Protection Association reports that Christmas tree fires cause an average of 14 civilian deaths, 40 civilian injuries and \$16.2 million in direct property damage per year. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, of the 200 Christmas tree fires that occur annually, almost half (48 percent) are caused by some type of electrical failure or malfunction.

To help reverse these staggering statistics, the Florida Municipal Electric Association (FMEA) advises taking extra caution when decorating for the holidays. The following list gives helpful safety tips to keep the season merry.

⚡ ⚡ ⚡ Tips for Holiday Electrical Safety ⚡ ⚡ ⚡

- ⚡ Inspect decorations before plugging in, checking for frayed or loose wires and loose connections.
- ⚡ Secure lights with insulated holders (never use tacks, staples or nails) or run strings of lights through hooks.
- ⚡ Never run electrical cords and wiring under rugs or carpet.

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- ⚡ Do not overload extension cords and electrical outlets or connect more than three strings of lights together.
- ⚡ Remove dead tree limbs near power lines and clear any storm debris that may pose a fire hazard to outside lightings and decorations. NEVER trim tree limbs that are touching power lines. If a damaged limb is resting on a power line, contact your local electric utility.
- ⚡ Place fresh-cut trees away from heat sources, such as heat registers, fireplaces, radiators and televisions.
- ⚡ Turn off holiday lights while you are away from home or before going to bed at night. Consider adding a programmable timer to ensure lights are not accidentally left on.
- ⚡ Unplug strings of lights before replacing bulbs, and replace burned-out bulbs promptly with ones of the same wattage.
- ⚡ When placing lights or decorations outdoors, use only decorations and extension cords certified for outdoor use.
- ⚡ When placing lights or decorations on outdoor trees, make sure to clear any damaged limbs. Fallen limbs can damage electrical cords and bulbs.
- ⚡ Plug all outdoor electric decorations into circuits with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) to avoid potential shocks.
- ⚡ Do not string lights on trees that are near or touching power lines.
- ⚡ On outside lights, point sockets down to avoid moisture build-up, wrap a plastic bag around connections and tie ends with electrical tape.
- ⚡ Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. Faulty bulbs could make the tree become charged with electricity.

To view many more tips for making your holiday season bright, as well as related links and free downloadable checklists and safety brochures, visit FMEA's Web site at www.publicpower.com.

About FMEA: Florida Municipal Electric Association (FMEA) represents the unified interests of 34 public power communities across the state, which provide electricity to approximately 3 million of Florida's residential and business consumers.

