

Keep Holiday Celebrations Bright and Safe!

Don't let electrical accidents darken your holiday celebrations. As you prepare for special holiday and family celebrations, look for and eliminate potential threats posed by holiday lighting, decorating and entertaining.

Cooking

According to the National Fire Protection Association, cooking has been the leading cause of home fires since 1990. Safe Electricity and Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative (SIEC) offer these tips to avoid shocks and fires in the kitchen:

- Inspect all small appliances and electrical cords to make sure they are in good condition, and read operating instructions before use.
- Never plug more than one high-wattage appliance into a single outlet.
- Stay focused and attentive to baking, brewing and simmering foods.
- Keep cooking areas clean and free of grease.
- Make sure a working fire extinguisher is on hand, and know how to operate it.
- Make sure the outlets near sinks are equipped with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI's) to prevent shocks.

Lighting and Decorating

Before decorating for the holidays, take some simple steps to avoid potential safety hazards. We've all read about tragedies resulting from holiday lighting mishaps. Safeguard yourself and your home so you are not among those.

- Only use lights that have been safely tested and have the UL label.

- Check each light string for broken sockets, frayed cords or faulty plugs.
- Always unplug lights when replacing a bulb.
- Don't string together more than three standard-size sets of lights.
- Place fresh-cut trees away from heat sources and water frequently.
- Do not overload outlets. If necessary, use surge protector strips that have circuit breakers to prevent overloads when multiple outlets are needed.
- Keep electrical cords away from high-traffic areas. Do not run them through doorways or staple, nail or tack cords to the wall. Do not hide them under rugs or carpets.
- For the outdoors, use only lights, cords, animated displays and decorations rated for outdoor use. Cords should be plugged into outlets equipped with GFCI's. Use a portable GFCI if your outdoor outlets don't have them.
- Always unplug lights before going to bed or leaving your home.

For more information visit the Web sites www.SafeElectricity.org and www.siec.coop.