

## Article for December 17, 2014

'Tis the season to let the light of Christ shine! Not only in our hearts, from our souls, but also in the form of holiday lights adorning our homes, businesses, barns and even vehicles! Hanging holiday lights can be a fun family activity and become a wonderful tradition for you and your family!

As beautiful as they are, they can also be dangerous! According to the US Fire Administration, one of every three home holiday tree fires is caused by electrical problems, and the lights we normally use can sometimes be a cause for fires. Always be fire smart and follow some tips recommended by FEMA and the US Consumer Product Safety Commission to “keep your decorations from going up in smoke” and make your lights shine safely!

Always use lights that have been tested for safety. They should have a label from an independent testing laboratory on them or with the packaging at very least.

Have an adult check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections. You can be frugal and pull the good bulbs out of the set (while it is unplugged) to re-use, but discard the damaged sets or replace them before using them.

Extension cord overload can also be a disaster waiting to happen! Use no more than three standard-sized sets of lights per single extension cord, or follow the manufacturers' direction on the package of specialty lighting to see how many strands can be connected safely.

Turn off lights on trees or other decorations before going to bed. If you love to doze off while watching your sparkling Christmas lights, simply add a timer so that they automatically turn off once you fall asleep!

Use caution if you choose to decorate your vehicle with additional lighting, too. Visit the Texas Department of Public Safety website to learn about restrictions of light colors to the front and rear of vehicles. We want to be festive, but we have to also Be Safe Out There!!