

## Safe Holiday Decorating Tips from Amica Insurance

Written by Laura Meade Kirk  
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### Amica Insurance reminds everyone to take care when decorating for the holidays

**LINCOLN, RI** Dec. 16, 2011 – Decorating for the holidays is a great way to get into the holiday spirit, but Amica Insurance reminds everyone that holiday decorations also can be dangerous.

About 12,500 people are treated in hospital emergency rooms each year for injuries directly related to holiday decorations, lights and Christmas trees, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Candles and Christmas trees also are a leading cause of fires this time of year, according to CPSC statistics. Candles cause about 11,600 fires each year, resulting in 150 deaths, 1,200 injuries and \$173 million in property losses. And Christmas trees are blamed on about 300 fires each year, resulting in an average of 10 deaths, 30 injuries and more than \$10 million in property damages.

"That's why Amica Insurance urges everyone to be extra careful with their holiday decorating," said Lisa Melton, an assistant vice president with Amica Insurance. "A few simple precautions can go a long way in keeping your family safe this holiday season."

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The CPSC offers these tips for safe decorating:

- If you're choosing a real tree, make sure it's fresh. It should be green. The needles should be hard to pull from branches, and the branches shouldn't break when bent. The tree also shouldn't lose many needles when its trunk is tapped on the ground.
- If you're using an artificial tree, make sure it is labeled "fire resistant." This doesn't mean the tree is fire-proof, but it should resist burning.
- Keep artificial and real trees away from heat sources.
- Use only flame-resistant decorations to trim your tree.
- Lights, whether used indoors or outside, should be tested for safety by a recognized testing laboratory, which means they comply with safety standards.
- Check all lights for broken and cracked bulbs, frayed wires and loose connections.
- Don't attach more than three standard-size sets of lights on an extension cord.
- Do not overload extension cords with any decorations.
- Avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable or that could pose a choking hazard for a young child.
- Never hang stockings or other decorations above a fireplace with an open flame.
- Move candles away from anything that can catch fire and never leave them unattended.

"Sometimes people are having such a nice time during the holidays that they forget to extinguish candles," said CPSC Chairman Hal Stratton. "Always put out lit candles before leaving a room or going to bed. Always keep burning candles within sight."

It's also important to use care when using your fireplace this time of year, Melton said. Make sure there are no decorations near the fireplace when it's in use, and don't throw cardboard boxes or wrapping paper into a fire because they can ignite suddenly and burn intensely, creating a dangerous situation.

"It's also important to never leave lights on or fires burning if you're leaving the house or going to bed," Melton said. "You don't want a fire or injury to ruin your holiday season, so please make sure all of your decorations are safe. "

### About Amica Mutual Insurance

Amica Mutual Insurance Company, the nation's oldest mutual insurer of automobiles, was

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founded in 1907. The company, with corporate headquarters in Lincoln, RI, is a national writer of automobile, homeowners, marine and personal umbrella liability insurance. Life coverage is available through Amica Life Insurance Company, a wholly owned subsidiary. Amica employs more than 3,200 people in 40 offices across the country.