



Holiday Safety Tips

The holidays are a great time for decorating, but as you string the lights and put up the tree, you have to be safe. Here are some simple steps that everyone can do to ensure a safe and happy holiday season.

- Don't overload your electric circuits. Check fuses or circuit breaker panels to see what your home can handle, and stay well within the limits.

Brenda Haverfield,
Document Supervisor

"Happy holidays and
have a wonderful New
Year!"



Illinois Rural Electric Cooperative

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1-800-468-4732

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner



- Watch for flickering lights, sparks from appliances or wall outlets, warm plates, plugs, or outlets, and dimming lights or television screens.
- Do not connect more than three light strings sets together. Light strings with screw-in bulbs should have no more than 50 bulbs connected together.
- Make sure there's a bulb in each socket. If a bulb is burned out, leave it until you have a replacement.
- Use only non-combustible and flame-resistant materials to trim a tree. Choose tinsel and artificial icicles of plastic and non-leaded metals.



Sean Middleton, Manager of Engineering

"Happy holidays!"



Jenissa Ezard, Director of Marketing

"I hope everyone has a great holiday!"

- Carefully inspect each decoration before plugging into an outlet. Cracked, frayed, loose or bare wires, and loose connections may cause a serious electric shock or start a fire. Replace damaged items immediately.
- Always unplug an electrical decoration before replacing the light bulbs or fuses.
- Surge protector strips are a safe option if you need more outlets.

- When purchasing an artificial tree, look for the label "Fire Resistant."
- When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness. A fresh tree is green, needles are hard to pull from branches and when bent between your fingers, needles do not break. The trunk butt of a fresh tree is sticky with resin, and when tapped on the ground, the tree should not lose many needles.
- Make sure the base is steady so the tree won't tip over easily.



Julie Day, Consumer Services Manager

"Wishing everyone a warm holiday season!"



Heather Seifert, Internet
Consumer Services
Representative

“Merry Christmas and
happy New Year!”

- To keep your tree fresh, cut off about two inches of the trunk to expose fresh wood for better absorption of water. Store the tree outside the house until you're ready to decorate.
- When placing your tree, make sure it is kept away from sources of heat, like fireplaces or heat vents, and out of the way of household traffic.
- Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights, and a person touching a branch could be electrocuted.

- Before using lights outdoors, check labels to be sure they have been certified for outdoor use. To hold lights in place, string them through hooks or insulated staples, not nails or tacks. Never pull or tug lights to remove them.

- Take care when using candles. Keep them away from decorations and the tree. Place them where they cannot be knocked over or reached by children. Do not leave lit candles in an unattended room.

- Make sure your smoke detectors are working properly.



Sandy Wynn, Consumer
Services Representative

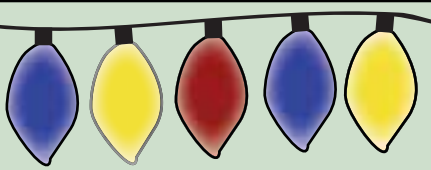
“I wish everybody a
wonderful and safe
holiday season!”



Steve Whitton,
Technical Director

“Season's greetings!”

- Keep your natural tree well watered to prevent bulbs from igniting dry branches.
- Don't allow children or pets to play with electrical decorations. Even small light decorations can produce a deadly electric shock if they are misused.
- Turn off all electrical decorations before leaving home or going to bed.



Light up holiday savings with LEDs

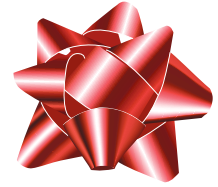
Decorating with lights this holiday season? Consider light-emitting diodes (LEDs). They cost more initially but last twice as long as traditional lights, and you'll recover the difference in three to four years.

- **Efficient.** LEDs use between 1 kWh and 3 kWh of energy, compared to between 12 kWh and 105 kWh for traditional lights, saving \$11 every holiday season.
- **Durable.** LEDs last about 4,000 hours. They're also made of plastic and less likely to break.
- **Don't want to use LEDs?** Consider trimming back the number of hours your traditional lights are on to six hours or less each day.

Sources:
Consumer Reports,
Alliance to Save Energy



Happy 2011



On behalf of the cooperative's Board of Directors, Bruce Giffin, the general manager, reports that there will not be an increase in rates in 2011.

"We didn't raise rates in 2010, and we won't need to again in 2011. We're benefiting from low interest rates and the continuing high productivity of the co-op's employees. As a result, we won't seek higher rates for electric service in 2011."

Websites to Check Out...

Here are a few fun and informational websites that may interest you.

www.ehow.com

If you are ever looking for a website to tell you how to do something, this is the place.

www.mint.com

Mint.com is a site for personal budgeting. Completely free, you can safely keep track of your expenses and savings.

www.picnik.com

This site offers free picture editing. You can choose from a variety of effects and decorative elements.