

ESA has safety tips for holiday decorating

The holiday season is here, and millions across Ontario are decking their halls and homes with lights and decorations to celebrate. Whether it's a giant twinkling snowman on the lawn and an eavestrough full of string lights, or a classically lit tree and hearth vignette, it's important to consider a few safety precautions before the revelry begins.

The Electrical Safety Authority (ESA), an authority mandated by the government of Ontario to enhance public electrical safety, has some key tips for Ontarians to keep their days merry and bright (and safe) when decorating this season.

Here are a few of ESA's tips:

- ? Let it snow, let it snow, but don't let it blur your vision. Look for overhead powerlines before setting up your ladder to hang outdoor lights and decorations. Did you know you should stay at least three metres away from all powerlines to ensure safety?
- ? Baby, it's cold outside ? make sure your decorations are rated for outdoor use. Freezing temperatures can damage indoor rated cords, not to mention the potential for ice and snow to get into the connections, which can start a fire.
- ? Underneath the tree, or anywhere else, never use damaged extensions cords and avoid plugging too many decorations into the same outlet. These can overheat the circuit and could start a fire.
- ? Real or fake? Always purchase lighting and other holiday electrical décor at a reputable retailer to avoid counterfeit products. Did you know lights should have a certification mark that ensures safety and proper inspection?
- ? If you'll be home for Christmas, don't forget to turn off holiday lights when you leave the house or go to bed. Even better, consider getting a timer for both indoor and outdoor lights.