For many people, decorating the Christmas tree is a favorite part of the holiday. Environmental Health and Safety and Human Resources, Diversity and Inclusion would like to offer some safety tips to make sure a mishap doesn't spoil your holiday season.

**Christmas Trees**

According to Curtis Plotkin, Director of Environmental Health and Safety, “the National Fire Protection Association reports that natural and artificial Christmas trees start an average of 250 structure fires each year.” These fires cause deaths, injuries and on average $13.8 million in property damage yearly.

- Select a fresh tree. The needles of pines and spruces should bend and not break and should be hard to pull off the branches. On fir species, a needle pulled from a fresh tree will snap when bent, much like a fresh carrot. Also, look for a trunk sticky with sap.
- Cut off about two inches of the trunk and put the tree in a sturdy, water-holding stand. Keep the stand filled with water so the tree does not dry out quickly.
- Keep your tree away from fireplaces, radiators and other heat sources. Make sure the tree does not block foot traffic or doorways.
- If you use an artificial tree, choose one that is tested and labeled as fire resistant. Artificial trees with built-in electrical systems should have the Underwriters Laboratory (UL) label.

**Lights**

- Only use indoor lights indoors (and outdoor lights only outdoors).
- Look for the UL label.
- Check lights for broken or cracked sockets, frayed/bare wires, or loose connections.
- Replace or repair any damaged light sets.
- Use no more than three light sets on any one-extension cord. Extension cords should be placed against the wall to avoid tripping hazards. Do not run cords under rugs.
- Turn off all lights on trees and decorations when you go to bed or leave the house.
- If you celebrate Hanukkah, play it safe when it comes to lighting your menorah.

**Holiday Road-Travel Advice**

“Before you start on that holiday trip by car, you need to check your vehicle out thoroughly,” says John Beisner, Executive Director of Risk Management at Cal State Fullerton.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recommends you inspect the following before a trip:

- the battery for proper voltage, the car’s charging system, all belts and hoses for leaks, the cooling system, windshield wipers, and tires (including spares) for proper pressure. Make sure you have the proper tire changing equipment as well.

Bring basic survival supplies such as a first aid kit, blankets, bottled water, and non-perishable food items. Also, bringing the basic tools such as tire pressure gauges, jumper cables, and ice scrapers can help you in case of any issues that may occur. Before you leave, check road conditions at [California Department of Transportation](https://www.dot.ca.gov/travel/).