# Are Your Christmas Decorations Fire Hazards?

Decorating for Christmas can be a pleasure. You create a hospitable and festive environment in which your community members can feel the spirit of the holidays.

But holiday decorations can also be fire hazards if they aren't used properly (or if they haven't been updated for a while). Check to make sure your decorations are safe before you display them.

**Consider Age Before Beauty**
Perhaps you have some beautiful old sparkling bulb lights that you haven't replaced in 20 years. Or, you might have an antique ceramic Christmas tree that gets hot to the touch when you plug it in.

Although these old decorations may recall wonderful memories of Christmas past, it may be necessary to retire them from display; they could be fire hazards. Look for loose wires and broken bulbs, and if any item gets hot while plugged in, unplug it.

Resist the urge to use older donated decorative holiday items, and consider springing for new LED lights. These lights are both less likely to catch fire and more likely to save money on your energy bill.

**Watch Out for Open Flames and Real Trees**
Nothing is cozier than the soft, flickering flame of candles on a cold winter's night. Maybe you've put together a Christmas display–complete with a real tree or evergreen wreaths–right next to the altar's lit candles. It looks great, and you think the placement will be fine as long as everyone is careful and follows basic safety rules. But that's a risk you should not take.

Boughs from real trees can dry out quickly and become tinder for fires from lit candles. Even if you try to remember to water your real tree regularly, it is still possible for it to catch fire if it is placed in close proximity to open flames.

Don't take unnecessary risks for the sake of a classic Christmas decorative tableau. If you do display a real tree or items made from real trees, keep them well away from lit candles. And make sure that someone is responsible for extinguishing any candle flames when people are not present (good advice year-round).

**Make a Decorations Protocol**
Don't leave decorations plugged in overnight. Put out any flames before you leave the room, and keep candle wicks trimmed. Make sure you have fire extinguishers in easy-to-reach places. **This checklist** can guide you as you figure out how to minimize fire hazards at a time when more people may be present at your organization–and decorations may cause additional risk.

Go ahead and celebrate Christmas to the fullest! Decorate and embrace the good cheer of the season! Just make sure to consider the possibility of increased fire hazards connected to holiday decorations.