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ESFI Warns of Holiday Decorating Hazards

Arlington, VA – During the holidays, many people put themselves at increased risk to fire and electrocution. The Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) urges you to follow these important safety tips when decorating for the season.

Each year holiday decorations and Christmas trees account for almost 2,000 fires and cause more than \$41 million dollars in property damage. The simple truth: many of these fires could be prevented. Almost a quarter of all Christmas tree fires are started because the tree was placed too close to a heat source. According to a recent ESFI study more than 20% of Americans do not take the simple step of turning off lighted decorations before going to bed.

ESFI encourages you to be safe by following these important safety tips when decorating:

- Before you begin, read and follow the manufacturer's instructions concerning installation and maintenance of all electrical decorations.
- Inspect each decoration before plugging into an outlet. Cracked, frayed, or bare wires and loose connections may cause a serious electric shock or start a fire.
- Prevent shock by plugging outdoor decorations into circuits protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs).
- Avoid plugging in too many holiday lights and other decorations into a single outlet. Overloaded outlets can overheat and cause a fire.
- Be careful not to mount or hang light strands in any way that might damage the cord's insulation.
- Use only lights and electrical decorations that have been certified by a recognized independent testing laboratory such as UL, CSA or ETL.
- Before using electrical products outdoors, make sure the product is approved and marked "for outdoor use."
- Send warranty and product registration forms to manufacturers. That way, they can notify you promptly in case of a recall or safety concerns.
- Turn lights and other decorations off when you leave or go to bed.

ESFI reminds everyone that electricity is a powerful tool. It can also be a lethal hazard. Better safety standards have reduced electrical hazards that cause deaths, injuries and property damage. But good safety habits are still the best prevention against electrical hazards.

For more holiday electrical safety information, please visit ESFI at: www.holidaysafety.org.

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