

Christmas Tree Lights – Simple Safety Tips

This information sheet is intended to give some simple advice on the steps that should be taken to ensure we all have a safe Christmas. This advice applies equally to the workplace and the home.

Buying

New lights should carry the European CE mark and many new models now run on a very low 12 to 36 volts via a mains transformer.

Light sets which do not have a transformer will have 240 volts running through them, increasing the danger of an electric shock if they become faulty. With that in mind, only purchase low voltage light sets. Existing lights that operate at 240 volts should be replaced at the earliest possible moment.



Battery powered LED lights are also now readily available.

Checking

Before use it is important to undertake a visual inspection of the lights. The following areas are indicative of the typical areas that need to be checked and/or considered.

- Check to ensure that the lights are fitted with an approved plug with a 3 amp fuse or a mains transformer;
- Wires should be double insulated (i.e. there is no earth wire), and firmly attached to the plug by the cord restraint;
- NEVER insert or remove bulbs when switched on;
- Inspect cables and bulbs for damage before use e.g. signs of overheating, cuts or fraying in cables, cracks or damage to lamp holders;
- Do not use lights which are damaged, dispose of them safely. Replace failed lamps with ones of the same rated voltage and wattage.
- Do not be tempted to use makeshift wiring for lights or to string several sets of lights together. If more (or less) lights are required, obtain a set to suit your needs.
- Never ever attempt to rectify any faults on decorative lighting whilst the plug is in. Always switch the lights off and remove the plug before carrying out adjustments or attempting any repair.
- 240 volt light sets should be tested and inspected regularly as part of your the portable appliance testing programme.

Using

- Read and follow the manufacturer's instructions;
- Use an RCD (Residual Current Device) for added protection against electric shock;
- Do not use multiple lights wired into the same plug;
- Do not use the lights outdoors unless specially made for such use;
- Don't run the cable under carpets or where it can be damaged;
- The lights on some sets can generate a considerable amount of heat and this should be taken into account when positioning the lighting. Keep lights clear of decorations and other combustible/flammable materials;
- Avoid cables becoming a tripping hazard;
- Use a stable support when hanging the lights; use steps or stepladders that are in good condition, placed on a level surface, and do not overreach when working at height.



Remember to switch the Christmas lights off when you leave the workplace!

Storing

- Take care when dismantling and packing the lights not to damage them;
- Avoid damp or excessively hot conditions.

Other Resources

AS16 - Electricity in the Workplace.

GD 22 – Safe Use of Electrical Extension Cables (or similar).

HSF11 Permit to Work on Electrical Equipment.

HSF19 Portable Appliance Testing Log Sheet.

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