

In this issue: Electrical Safety and Cranberry Sauce

The holidays are right around the corner. Soon, holiday lights will be hung, decorations set out, extension cords will be used and maybe even a space heater! Please take a few minutes and read the electrical safety tips below. Let's have a happy and safe holiday season!

Tip: When hanging holiday lights, avoid the staple gun! Staples can damage electrical cords, causing overheating and may lead to fire. Use plastic light hangers as a safe alternate.

Cranberry sauce

1 can cranberry sauce
1/3 cup chopped onions
4-6 slices of bacon
2 tablespoons brown sugar
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

Cook 4-6 slices of bacon in skillet until crisp. Take out bacon set aside to drain then crumble. Drain all but 1 Tbsp of grease, add onions. Cook onion until done. Drain any remaining grease, add cranberry sauce to onions, simmer on med-low, add brown sugar, Worcestershire sauce and crumbled bacon, simmer until bubbly, and serve.

I usually have to double it for more than 4 people.

Holiday Electrical Safety

From icicle lights hanging down from the roof to elaborate lawn decorations, many families decorate with festive holiday lights. But are they taking the necessary precautions so no one is injured by a frayed extension cord or a damaged wire on a strand of lights?

To protect yourself and your family from potential electrical hazards, plug all outdoor holiday lights into a special receptacle called a Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI). This receptacle is special because it provides personal protection from electrical shocks.

GFCI receptacles are now required wherever an electrical outlet is within 6 feet of water. That's why they're installed in kitchens, bathrooms, basements, garages, and outdoors. Older homes, even those built just twenty years ago--may not have GFCI receptacles, inside or out.

Next time you're outside, take a look at your outdoor receptacles. Do they have two

buttons on them, marked "test" and "reset?" If they do, you have a GFCI receptacle. If not, it is recommended that you have a GFCI installed before the holiday lighting season.

Another option is to purchase an inexpensive extension cord set that has a built-in GFCI receptacle. First plug the GFCI cord set into the outdoor outlet, and then plug your other extension cords and holiday lights into the GFCI cord set. These GFCI cord sets are available at hardware stores and home centers. They cost about \$25.

One other safety precaution: It is important to test your GFCI receptacle before plugging holiday lights into it to make sure it is still providing protection. You should check all GFCI receptacles once a month.

Christmas tree lights

Those strands of holiday lights look innocent enough, but when you plug too many into the same outlet, you run the risk of overloading a circuit. Signs of an overloaded circuit are lights that flicker or dim; a TV screen that shrinks in size; an outlet or switch that feels warm to the touch. Another is a tripped circuit breaker or a blown fuse.

Before you begin to decorate, it's a good idea to check out the condition of each light strand. If you find broken or cracked sockets, loose connections, or frayed or cut insulation, it's best to discard that strand and buy a new one. When shopping for lights or other electrical decorations, make sure they have the UL safety-approved label. And don't purchase outdoor lights for indoor use. They usually burn hotter than indoor lights.

Here are some other important safety tips:

- Unplug tree lights when you're not home, and when you go to bed.
- Never use electric lights on a metallic tree.
- For outside decorations, use only lights rated for outdoor use.
- Make sure outdoor lights and all electrical decorations are plugged into a Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter receptacle, preferably with a weatherproof cover.

What you need to know about extension cords

Extension cords can be overloaded just as easily as your house wiring, so don't plug more than three strands of lights into one extension cord. After plugging your decorations into an extension cord, check to see if the cord is warm to the touch. If it is, unplug some of the decorations. Better yet, use an extension cord with thicker wires.

Here are some additional important tips:

- Don't run extension cords under rugs or carpets.
- Keep extension cords out of the reach of infants.
- Never use indoor extension cords outside. They are not designed to withstand outdoor

conditions.

- Only use extension cords that have the UL label.
- Use one long extension cord rather than linking several shorter cords together.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, more than 1,200 people end up at the emergency room for an injury related to holiday lights every year. Another 6,000 are injured by holiday decorations and Christmas trees.

Have a happy and safe holiday season!

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