

Don't take Alderney's electricity light-ly this Christmas



Once a year, twinkling fairy lights and colourful Christmas illuminations are retrieved from damp, dusty storage spaces to deck our homes for the festive season. But, poorly stored, old electrical decorations and overloaded sockets create unnecessary hazards at this time of year warns the Electrical Safety Council.

To help prevent the most common electrical problems at Christmas the Electrical Safety Council recommends following these simple precautions and checks:

Indoor Christmas lights

Most people re-use lights year after year but Christmas lights that have not seen the light of day since early January should be thoroughly checked before use. Make sure the cabling is not damaged, the bulbs are secure and not broken and, if the lights are old, that they conform to current safety standards. If in any doubt throw the lights away and buy new ones.

Outdoor Christmas lights

Use the same basic safety checks as for indoor lights, but in addition ensure that any lights used for illuminations outside the home are designed specifically for use in the elements. Invest in an RCD, this life-saving device automatically cuts off the electricity supply when a fault is detected and is particularly important when using electricity outside.

Sockets are in great demand at Christmas not only for fairy lights, but also to power new toys and appliances. Overloading sockets with extension leads and other appliances can cause them to overheat.

The Electrical Safety Council's top tips for safety at Christmas:

- Always check that Christmas lights are not damaged or broken before use and look out for loose wires.
- Check that decorative lighting has a safety transformer. This reduces mains voltage to a safer level of about 12-24 volts.
- Even Christmas lights need a break - switch all lights off when you go to bed or go out.
- Make sure you know where your fuse box (consumer unit) is located so you can reach it quickly in emergencies.
- Ensuring your home has sufficient sockets at convenient points will avoid the danger of overheating and will minimize the need for hazardous extension leads and adaptors.
- If somebody does suffer from an electric shock - firstly make sure you switch off the electricity and remove the casualty from danger if safe to do so, then contact the emergency services.
- Ensure all outdoor lights are connected via a 30mA RCD protected socket. An RCD will provide added protection against electric shock.

Extract from the Electrical Safety Council

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