



## Preventing Holiday Light Horror

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***Topics: Dangers associated with installing holiday lights; excessive costs involved with improperly installed light displays or injuries; complexities of new lighting products and electrical certifications; inconveniences of installation; alternatives to homeowners hanging their outdoor holiday lights themselves.***

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These aren't your father's holiday lights. The emergence of a wide variety of outdoor lighting options, along with the growing trend for more impressive home light displays with less time for homeowners to invest, has created high demand for professional assistance with common residential displays. This paper will investigate the dangers, costs, and inconveniences associated with hanging

outdoor holiday lights and address the steps homeowners can take to improve their overall holiday experience.

### Holiday Injuries Are On the Rise

While difficult to track, there are a variety of reports from reputable government and private sources that highlight the rash of injuries and visits to emergency rooms nationwide that result from holiday decorating. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) conducted a three year study and reported that nearly 18,000 individuals were treated in emergency rooms for holiday decorating falls alone. It is important to note that this number only includes people who sought medical treatment at an emergency room. It is estimated that the true number of injuries is substantially higher; perhaps two or three times this number. Other injury statistics include:



- Every year, hospital emergency rooms treat about 12,500 people for injuries such as falls, cuts, and shocks related to holiday lights, electrical decorations, and Christmas trees. (U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC))

- 200 fire-related fatalities and injuries happen during the two days of December 31 and January 1 (holidaysafety.org).
- 2,000 fires and more than \$41 million dollars in property damage each year are caused by holiday decorations (i.e. lights) and Christmas Trees (National Fire Protection Association).
- Nearly 6,000 emergency room patients are seen each season due to holiday decorating falls alone (CDC).
- 330 residential structural fires occur due to holiday decorations each year (USFA).
- Most of these injuries are preventable (CDC)

These statistics are just a few of the many that are collected by various private and government agencies each season, and reflect the ever-growing difficulties associated with homeowner safety. For example, the increased construction of larger homes with much steeper roof pitches has made hanging lights a major challenge for even the veteran holiday light decorator.

## More Complex Electrical Codes, Certifications and Lighting Options

When was the last time you read through the Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) certification 588 for holiday string lights? Does 210 Watts mean anything to you in regards to the number of incandescent light strings that can be connected? For most people, the answer is "Probably Not."

*CPSC has recalled more than 1 million counterfeit electrical products in recent years.*

The massive improvements in technology such as icicle lights, LED lights, and motion lights have brought us light displays like we've never seen before. However, improvements in these products have brought an increase in the complexity of light types, maximum wattage, and GFCI safety, just to name a few. For years, commercial businesses and public holiday display events have hired trained professionals to ensure the safety of the public. Unfortunately, residential homeowners have lagged behind this trend, mostly due to the lack of availability of professionals who offer residential light hanging services at a reasonable rate.

A few additional things to consider in regards to electricity and holiday lights are the following:

- CPSC has recalled more than 1 million counterfeit electrical products in recent years. It is essential to use a product that has been tested by an independent laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL).
- Know the number of light strings that can be connected, based on the maximum wattage certified for those lights.
- Waterproof all outdoor electrical connections.
- Know the gauge of your extension cords. Older cords using small wires will overheat with today's lights. Do you know the difference between 18 gauge and 16 gauge?
- Never cut off the ground pin to force a three-pronged plug into a two-pronged outlet.
- Never run extension cords through water.

- If in doubt, consult with a professional before hanging your lights.

These are just some of the recommendations that you need to be aware of when working with electricity and lights during the holidays. For a more detailed list, perform an internet search on “holiday safety tips,” or contact a ProMaster Holiday Light professional at (513) 724-0539 or [www.MasterMyList.com](http://www.MasterMyList.com) to take the worry out of your holiday light display this year.

## Excessive Costs of Hanging Lights Can Be Avoided

When it comes to hanging holiday lights, homeowners can incur costly mistakes either when hanging lights themselves, or by hiring an amateur installer. Here are some costs that can be avoided:

- **Avoid Cheap Products.** If you are a “Do-It-Yourselfer,” (DIY) don’t fall prey to cheap products, as they cost more in the long run. Sadly, the money saved at the start of the project often ends up being wasted when the DIY needs to go back to the hardware store to purchase the correct replacement products. It is never satisfying when a beautiful display ends in blown circuits and light strands, leaving the homeowner “in the dark.”
- **Time is Money.** The DIY that spends the weekend up on the ladder, climbing the roof, wrapping lights around bushes, and messing with strings that don’t light up, invests hours of unnecessary time that could be better spent at work, or with family.
- **Injuries Aren’t Just Painful, They’re Expensive.** Falls, sprains, electrical shocks and severe cuts often require medical treatment that can be much more costly than the homeowner planned. Also, missed workdays due to injury cost the DIY even more than if a professional had been hired in the first place to hang the lights.
- **Hiring Amateurs is Risky.** Hiring a relative or amateur “Chuck in a Truck” repairman can be a costly mistake. The courts are littered with lawsuits of unqualified, uninsured repairmen that were injured while working on the homeowner’s property and actually sue the homeowner. Many homeowner’s policies exclude protection in this case. Also, the “helpful” son-in-law that breaks his back falling off a ladder will be a costly burden that no homeowner wants or needs, not to mention the family rift that sometimes occurs when this happens.
- **What Goes Up, Must Come Down.** The amateur installer is nowhere to be found when it comes time to take the lights down. It is recommended for safety that all holiday lights be taken down no more than 90 days from when they were installed. A company like ProMaster, [www.MasterMyList.com](http://www.MasterMyList.com), is reputable, insured, professional, and will be there in January to keep the DIY off the ladder in sub-freezing temperatures.
- **Don’t Pay for What You Don’t Need.** Many dedicated light display companies are not focused on the residential customer’s needs. They often force the homeowner to pay for design services and charge outrageous prices for lights, while including a “storage fee.” Homeowners should look for a company like ProMaster, [www.MasterMyList.com](http://www.MasterMyList.com) that has pricing to fit any budget, offers FREE takedown service, and allows the homeowner to purchase lights at much lower costs.

## Hanging Holiday Lights is Time Consuming, Inconvenient, and a Hassle

Remember that scene from the famous movie, “Christmas Vacation”, when Clark Griswold stands in the front yard and flips the switch on the light display? As the entire family, along with in-laws, stand in total darkness, Clark hurries back up the ladder to check the thousands of lights and multiple electrical connections for problems. That scene is more realistic than many think.

Let’s face it. Beautiful holiday light displays are a wonderful way to enjoy the holidays with family, neighbors, and friends. But when the DIY’s time is spent hanging lights, rechecking connections, weatherproofing outlets, fixing burnt out bulbs, etc., the family is neglected. Aren’t holidays a time to celebrate with family, friends, or significant others? By hiring a professional installer from ProMaster, [www.MasterMyList.com](http://www.MasterMyList.com) the backbreaking, detailed, intricate job of hanging lights is left to the pro while you enjoy all that the holidays offer. Some additional time-savers and conveniences to the homeowner that uses ProMaster include:

- FREE light takedown in January when it’s cold, grey, icy, and snowy.
- Roof and gutter inspection while lights are being hung to spot potential problems before they become costly.
- More time to enjoy holiday activities that make this season special.

**Call a ProMaster Holiday Light professional at 513-724-0539 or visit [www.MasterMyList.com](http://www.MasterMyList.com) to enjoy this holiday season without the risk and worry of hanging your lights.**

## The Case for Hiring ProMaster to Hang Your Lights

This report has just touched the surface of the dangers, excessive costs, and inconveniences of hanging holiday lights. Aside from the tremendous physical and financial risk involved, it is clear that holiday lights are no longer as simple as throwing a strand around the holly bushes and pines. Once considered a luxury, hiring a professional to hang holiday lights is fast becoming the smart choice for today’s homeowner.

To recap the value of hiring a ProMaster professional to hang your lights this holiday season and beyond, consider the following:

- No risk of injury from ladder and roof falls, electrocution, and other injuries. Hence, no added medical bills this year.
- Rigorous criminal background and drug checks of all ProMaster professionals ensure that you are not inviting a criminal onto your property.
- FREE light takedown after the holidays.
- Gutter and Roof inspection done while hanging the lights at NO ADDITIONAL CHARGE.
- More time for you to spend on holiday activities.
- No need to study complex electrical mandates and certifications – ProMaster installers are experts.

- More choice: You can purchase your own lights instead of being forced to use the high-priced installer's lights.
- Pricing to meet your budget; flexibility to meet your holiday light design requests.
- Simple one-call or online scheduling request at [www.MasterMyList.com](http://www.MasterMyList.com) .

These are just some of the added-value benefits each ProMaster customer receives when they rely on the professionals to install their holiday lights. To learn more about why ProMaster Home Repair & Handyman is a homeowner's best choice, please visit [www.MasterMyList.com](http://www.MasterMyList.com) or call 513-724-0539.

## BONUS: 2010/2011 Pricing Information

ProMaster is pleased to assist you with your holiday lighting project. The following policies and pricing schedule for 2010/2011 applies:

1. Safety: ProMaster will exercise reasonable effort to accommodate your lighting plan without compromising the safety of the premises. We request your support of the following guidelines to achieve this end:
  - Only 3 strands of lights, maximum will be electrically connected in series.
  - Only lights, decorations and cords that are rated for outside use, bearing red UL marks, will be used
  - Outdoor lighting will be powered by GFCI-protected outdoor electrical receptacles only.
  - Only lighting or decorations that are new, in a sealed package may be used.
  - Only light fasteners, hardware or clips that are new (sealed in package) may be used.
  - Should the craftsman require a lift, an additional \$250 fee may apply to the job.
2. Pricing: The following charges serve as a price guide to assist homeowners in framing their budget. Individual pricing due to height, installation difficulty or display customization and materials may alter final price.
  - \$3/linear foot for lighting installed up to a height equivalent to 12' from where the foundation meets the ground.
  - \$5/linear foot for lighting installed between 12'-30' from where the foundation meets the ground.
  - Time + Materials + Equipment will be used for lighting above 30' in height, customized installation, or other work performed (repairs, hanging decorations, etc.).
  - Shopping time will be billed at the normal hourly rate.
  - Pricing assumes lights are new when given to craftsman; troubleshooting or repair of lights will be billed at the normal hourly rate
3. Warranty: Due to its temporary nature, ProMaster will not warranty the installation or operation of holiday lighting. Operation of all lighting will be verified prior to obtaining the customer's signature on the completed work invoice. Troubleshooting or repair of failed light strands following the customer's signoff will be billed at ProMaster's normal hourly rate plus current fuel surcharge.
4. Removal: ProMaster will remove only the lighting which it installed, free of charge. In addition, the customer must schedule this free removal service prior to January 30, 2011. Otherwise, the normal hourly rate and service charge will apply to remove the lights.