



Preventing Holiday Lighting Horror

Topics Covered: Common Problems associated with installing holiday lights; excessive costs involved with improperly installed light displays or injuries, complexities of new lighting products and electrical certifications, and the inconveniences of wasting hours and sometimes days with challenges, have forced many homeowners to reconsider hanging their outdoor holiday lights themselves.

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))

Emergency Rooms treat about 12,500 people each holiday season for injuries related to ladder falls, cuts, and shocks (Consumer Product Safety Commission)

- 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).

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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."

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.

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 to take the worry out of your holiday light display this year.

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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 **whether you're hanging them yourself or hiring an installer:**

- **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 you need 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.
- **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. ProMaster 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, that has pricing to fit any budget, offers **FREE** takedown service, and allows the homeowner to purchase lights at much lower costs.



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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. Don’t get Griswolded this Winter. (Yes, I made up a verb)

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 Instaler, 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 use 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 at **NO ADDITIONAL COST**.
- **More time to enjoy holiday activities** that make this season special.

Why Hiring a Pro Makes Sense

- **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**.
- **No need to study complex electrical mandates and certifications – ProMaster installers are experts.**

Most Importantly- ENJOY MORE TIME WITH YOUR FAMILY THIS HOLIDAY SEASON!



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