

# Christmas and decorative lighting safety

## Fact sheet

Each year ESV responds to electrical incidents caused by faulty or non-compliant electrical equipment, including Christmas lights and decorations.

When putting up and using Christmas lights and decorations we have some safety tips to ensure your Christmas doesn't end in disaster.

### Top ten tips for Christmas light safety

1. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions and safety warnings.
2. Ensure all lights, extension leads and powerboards are suitable for your intended use – use indoor and outdoor lights and decorations only as recommended.
3. Buy Australian-compliant lights – beware of buying non-compliant lights online and from overseas sellers as they may not meet current Australian standards and may cause fires, electric shock or electrocution. Visit [www.eess.gov.au](http://www.eess.gov.au) to check if the lights you're buying are compliant and registered.
4. Test all Christmas lights before putting them up and check old lights and leads before re-using them – never use a damaged lead.
5. Always turn off decorative or Christmas lights before going to bed or leaving the house.
6. Make sure the power is off when putting up your Christmas lights or changing light bulbs.
7. Don't alter or modify lights or any electrical product.
8. If you have a living Christmas tree, switch off and unplug lights when watering the tree.
9. Keep Christmas lights out of reach of children.
10. If you have any concerns about the safety of the Christmas decorations dispose of them safely or get them checked by a licensed electrical contractor.

### Check old lights and decorations

Before using last year's Christmas decorations, untangle them and inspect the plug, leads, blowers and lamp holders to check there are no exposed wires or obvious damage.

Check your old Christmas lights meet the latest safety requirements, including having insulated pins – all electrical appliances sold after 2006 must have insulated pins. If the plug does not have insulated pins, your Christmas decorations are over 15 years old and it's time to replace them with new Christmas decorations.

Check your old lights haven't been part of a product recall – you can do this by searching the Product Safety recalls website at <https://www.productsafety.gov.au/recalls>.

### Outdoor lights

Outdoor Christmas lights have an IP rating number (e.g. IPX3, IP23, IP44) showing how weatherproof the light is – outdoor equipment must have a rating of at least IP23.

Some outdoor Christmas lights require the transformer (plug) to be located indoors and away from any weather, while others may only be suitable for temporary use outdoors.

## Outdoor lighting tips:

- Only use lights intended for outdoors – all outdoor connections and lights must be weatherproof.
- Secure outdoor lights and decorations to avoid damage in wind or storms and turn them off in poor weather.
- Use solar powered lights – LED or extra-low-voltage lights (5V, 12V or 24V) – these are the safest options to prevent electric shock and fires caused by over-heating.
- Don't put Christmas lighting around or above swimming pools or have leads lying in water or wet areas.
- Don't run electrical leads over walkways or driveways where they may be damaged.
- Avoid passing electrical leads through doorways and windows where leads may be damaged or wrapping lights and cables around objects that may damage them.
- Flood lights, halogen lights and other high powered lights can become very hot – keep them away from anything that might catch fire.

## Buying Christmas lights

Plug in Christmas lights must meet safety standards, are required to have an Australian certificate of approval and need to be registered on the national register located at [www.eess.gov.au](http://www.eess.gov.au) before they can be sold.

Buy your lights from a reputable dealer who will know the electrical equipment safety requirements for selling Christmas lights in Victoria and have registered themselves and the equipment on the national register. You can [use the ERAC public search function](#) to search for the equipment.

Look for the regulatory compliance mark (RCM) logo as shown. This indicates compliance with Australian Standards. This mark must be on the plug in Christmas lights and powered decorations and are normally found on the packaging, plastic tag near the plug, or on the transformer body if it is an extra low voltage type.



Regulatory compliance mark (RCM)

## Beware of buying Christmas lights online from overseas

Electrical equipment sold in Australia must meet strict electrical safety standards.

Beware of buying Christmas lights online particularly from overseas sellers. Other countries have different safety standards and the products sold in these countries may be unsafe for use in Australia.

Visit [www.eess.gov.au](http://www.eess.gov.au) to search for registered products.

## Buying second hand

Second hand Christmas lights should be checked by a licensed electrician or electrical contractor to ensure they are safe to use.

Safety requirements for Christmas lights have changed in recent years, some second hand lights may not meet the latest safety requirements.

## Connecting safely

Below are some general tips on safely connecting and using electrical equipment and Christmas lights around the home:

- Test your safety switch and smoke detector to make sure they are working – if you don't have safety switch, get one installed or use a portable safety switch.
- Use power boards fitted with over-load protection – avoid using double adaptors or piggy backing plugs.
- Unwind all extension leads to avoid overheating.
- Use factory-made extension leads or those made by a licensed electrical contractor.
- Use extra-low voltage outside, such as LED or solar lights.
- Using multiple high-powered lamps may overload your electric circuits.
- If you must use outdoor electrical connections make sure they are weatherproof. You can buy weatherproofing accessories.

More information is available on the Energy Safe Victoria website: [www.esv.vic.gov.au](http://www.esv.vic.gov.au)