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CHRISTMAS ELECTRICS SAFETY ADVICE

Don't take 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 Gibraltar Electricity Authority.

To help prevent the most common electrical problems at Christmas the Gibraltar Electricity Authority 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 doubts 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 a Residual Current Device (RCD), this life-saving device automatically cuts off the electricity supply when a fault is detected and is particularly important when using electricity outside.

Overloading sockets

Sockets are in great demand at Christmas not only for fairy lights, but also to power new toys and appliances. Overloaded sockets with extension leads and other appliances can cause them to overheat. The Gibraltar Electricity Authority recommends using one plug per socket and turning appliances off when not in use.

We are urging the public to use electrical goods sensibly this Christmas. If you are unsure of last year Christmas Lights – don't use them and don't overload sockets.

The Gibraltar Electricity Authority 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 – 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 is located so that 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.