

# Tripped circuit breakers deserve attention!

by Michael LaPlante, Master Electrician

## A little electrical safety could prevent a winter house fire

It's bound to happen this winter...some family, maybe one you know, will lose their home and most of their belongings to a fire.

According to the US Fire Administration, electrical overloads, candles and Christmas trees increase the incidence of wintertime fires. In fact, in a recent article, they reported that each year nearly 156,000 fires in the US occur during the winter holiday season alone.

Hopefully, if a fire occurs locally, there will be no loss of life. And hopefully they will have insurance to cover their loss. But could the fire have been avoided in the first place? Chances are, yes.

"Everyone needs to be a little more aware of what is being plugged in," explains Jay Kelley. Jay is Portland's Fire Prevention Officer. Education is a big part of his job. "An electrical circuit trips for a reason. It's either overloaded or overheated. It's best to figure out why."

Tips to prevent winter holiday fires include:

- Only use lights that have been certified by a recognized lab like UL, ETL, or CSA
- Check wiring of all lights and extension cords
- Don't use lights with broken or frayed wires
- Don't connect more than three strands of lights together
- Unplug decorations when you leave the house or go to bed
- Don't use electric lights on metallic trees

If a circuit breaker trips or a fuse blows, don't reset it and forget about it. To find out why it tripped, ask a licensed electrician to check the circuits for you. Your home, your family and your life are far too important to leave to chance.

This holiday season, Jay Kelley and the Portland Fire Department have three simple requests of local residents: "Please don't leave your holiday lights on when you're not home. Please be careful with lighted candles. And remember, if a circuit breaker trips, it's doing its job to protect you. Please find out why."

*For more electrical safety tips or an evaluation of your residential electrical system, contact Michael at 761-2446.*

