

There They Go Again

Marvin and D-Wayne have found yet another way to get into trouble with electricity.

Your grandparents' or great-grandparents' treasured ornaments—the one that looks like a snowflake or the jolly old glass Santa—may have a special place on your Christmas tree. Strings of their old colored lights should not.

If you dig in attic trunks, you might find dusty wired lights. Or you might see them at garage sales. Well, leave them alone. The old lights use more electricity than the ones your parents buy today.

They can overload an electric circuit, which routes electricity to several electric outlets in the same room. This could make the TV set and lamps go off. Then an adult has to get a flashlight and reset or replace the circuit.

Those old Christmas lights can cause even worse problems if their wires are frayed or cracked or the bulbs are broken. Light cords that are covered (or “insulated”) improperly can shock you, even if they don't look worn. Sparks from the wires and bulbs can start fires. A fire could burn down your Christmas tree, your presents and even your house!

Here are some rules to follow, using up-to-date Christmas lights:

- Don't overload a single outlet.
- Keep extension cords out of high traffic areas.
- If a light strand looks damaged, don't take any chances.
- Never leave your decorations lighted while you're away from home or after you've gone to bed.
- Unplug light strings before replacing bulbs or fuses.
- Don't string together more than three strands of lights with push-in bulbs. If you're using strands with screw-in bulbs, the attached strands should not total more than 50 bulbs.

Have a safe and merry Christmas!



Cartoonist Keith Graves is a popular artist and author of children's books.