FAQ: Electrical Safety

What are the leading causes of electrical fires?
The majority of electrical fires are caused by the misuse of appliances or lack of maintenance on an appliance, incorrectly installed wiring, or overloaded extension cords and circuits.
http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/downloads/pdf/fswy5.pdf

What is the most fatal month for electrical fires?
Most fatal electrical fires occur in December because there is increased indoor activtiy in the winter months. This increased indoor activity increases lighting, heating, and appliance use.
http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/downloads/pdf/fswy5.pdf

What is the best way to prevent a home electrical fire?

- Check your electrical appliances and wiring regularly.
- Replace all worn, old, or damaged appliance or extension cords immediately.
- Keep electrical appliances and cords away from wet floors and counters, especially in the bathroom and kitchen.
- When buying electrical appliances and power strips make sure they are tested and listed by a testing laboratory such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL). Underwriters Laboratories® is an independent product safety certification organization.
- Never force a three prong plug into a two-slot outlet or extension cord.
- Don't overload electrical sockets. Only have one plug in each socket.
- Be sure electrical cords are not under rugs or furniture. They can become worn and frayed, short circuit, and cause a fire.

http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/citizens/all_citizens/home_fire_prev/electrical.shtm

Are extension cords safe to use?
Pay close attention when using extension cords.

- All extension cords are not created to hold the same amount of electrical current. Generally, the thicker the wire the more the current it can handle.
- Read all labels and markings. Be sure it has a UL marking. Never keep an extension cord plugged in when not in use.
- Use power strips equipped with overload protection.
- Do not overload power strips with too many appliances that draw a lot of power. Appliances that draw a lot of power include (but are not limited to) items that generate heat such as hair dryers, curling irons, hot plates, and microwaves.