

2025

Holiday Safety Guide



Introduction

At UL Standards & Engagement, we believe safety helps make the holidays truly shine.

For more than a century, we have fixated on the details that make homes safer — from the moment you flip on the light in the morning (that's UL 20, the Standard for Switches) to the thud of your garage door closing at night (UL 325, the Standard for Automatic Garage Doors).

Our mission of working for a safer world does not take a break for the holidays — it matters more than ever. Our third annual Holiday Safety Guide found that 90% of 2,019 U.S. adults surveyed plan to celebrate Thanksgiving and winter holidays this year, and are likely to engage in behaviors that differ from the rest of the year — decking homes with lights, cooking elaborate meals, traveling long distances, and filling shopping carts with gifts they wouldn't typically buy at any other time.

Those seasonal shifts come with added safety risks — ones that can turn festive moments into emergencies. Our 2025 study uncovered several surprising misconceptions about holiday safety that

could put families at risk. The good news? A few simple steps can keep celebrations bright, joyful, and safe — exactly as the season should be.

ULSE has developed more than 1,700 safety standards and guidance documents, which are incorporated into millions of products that are part of holiday celebrations and gift lists. Most safety standards are voluntary, and while many are widely adopted by manufacturers, this does not guarantee that every product on the market conforms to standards. (We have it on good authority though that everything made in Santa's workshop is tested and certified to safety standards.)

This guide is designed to help you make smart decisions to reduce the risk when cooking, gifting, decorating, and traveling this season. We are sharing safety standards and tips based on more than a century of expertise to help ensure your holidays are spent gathered around the fire with loved ones — not with the fire department.



Gifting

The top electronics, appliances, and toys on this year’s wish lists include items that will be carefully thought about and researched. For the 67% of Americans who plan to shop this season, that research should include a look at product safety.

The lure of a good bargain is stronger this season. This year, 58% of gift buyers surveyed said that price mattered to them most in their holiday shopping, up significantly from 49% who said the same last year. As consumers head into stores or buy online, here are steps to take to help ensure that good deals don’t bargain away safety.



Top Three Safety Tips



Know the Rechargeable Risks

Many of the most coveted electronic gifts are powered by lithium-ion batteries, something half (50%) of Americans admit to knowing nothing about, which can contribute to dangerous practices that increase fire risk. Avoid charging overnight, keeping products on chargers once they’re fully charged, and placing rechargeable devices — particularly large products like e-bikes and power tools — in areas that block your exit in the event of fire.



Buy and Replace Products and Accessories Wisely

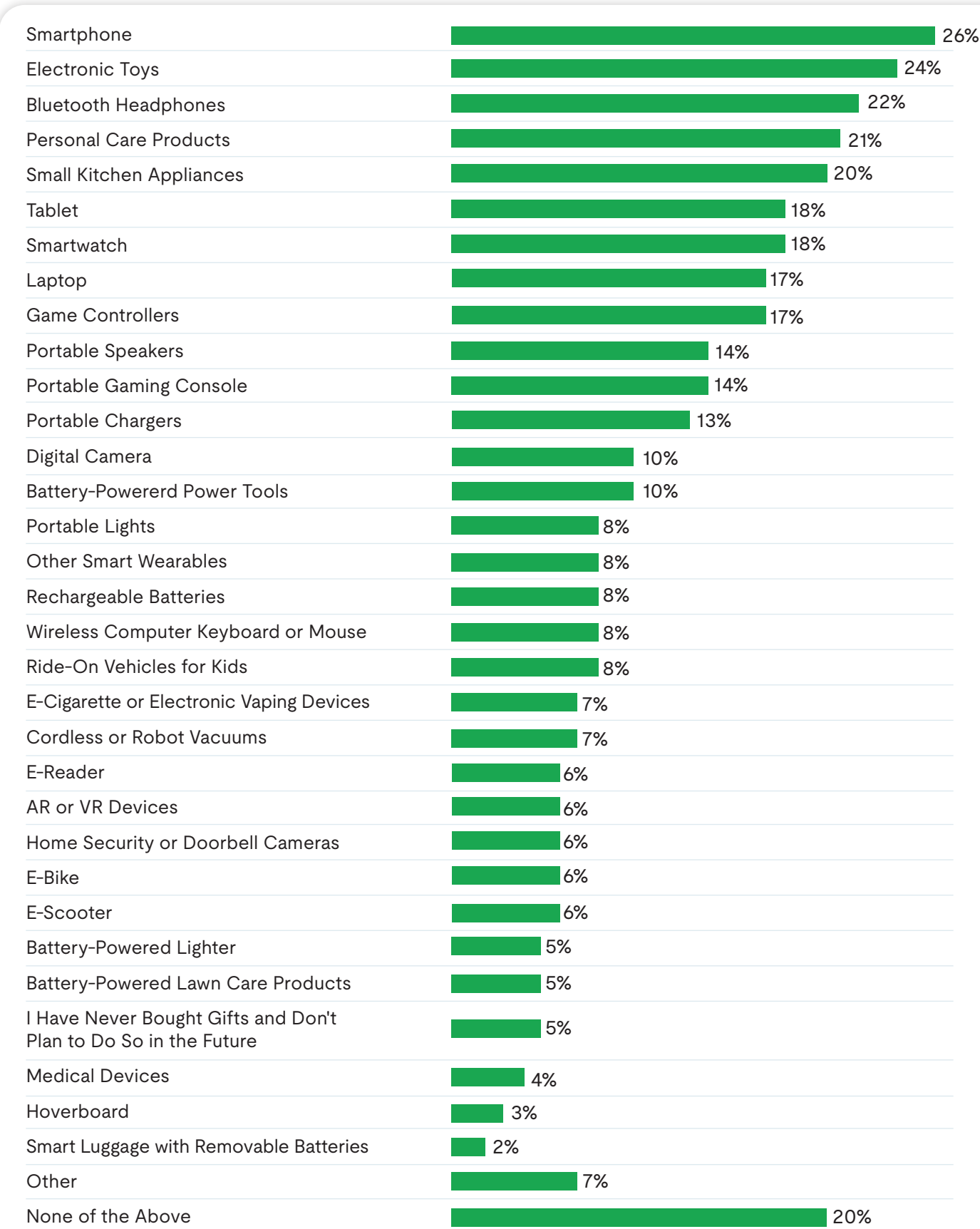
Choosing products and batteries that adhere to safety standards and are designed to prevent thermal runaway — an uncontrollable self-heating state that can result in fire or even explosion — can help ensure that dream gift doesn’t become a nightmare. When it is time for a new battery or the charging cable is misplaced, buy replacement items from the original manufacturer.



Consider Safety Differences for Children

Nearly 3 in 10 (27%) gift buyers in the ULSE holiday study plan to buy a gift for a child aged 6 years or younger this season. Another 28% have children 7 to 12 on their lists. With a total of 60% of gift-givers likely buying for children, it is important to be thoughtful about safety when making purchasing decisions. In addition to choosing rechargeable products like hoverboards and VR devices that meet standards, manufacturer instructions come with important tips for safe operation.

Top Rechargeable Holiday Gifts



Holiday Fakes: Real Consequences

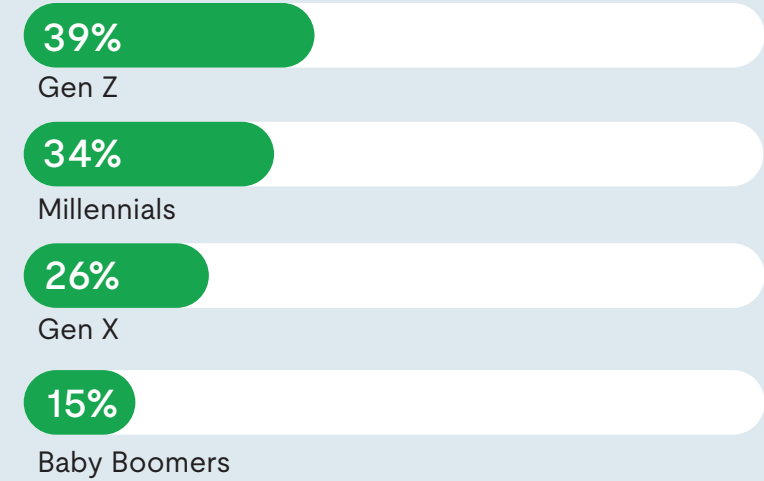
When people think of counterfeit items, they often think of accessories and apparel. While buyers may be aware they are not getting a genuine designer handbag for \$20, they may have a harder time distinguishing a counterfeit lithium-ion battery from the original manufacturer item. Just about anything you can purchase could have a counterfeit version, and millions of consumers have fallen victim to fakes. More than one-third (36%) of gift buyers said they have likely knowingly or unknowingly purchased a counterfeit product as a gift at some point, translating to an estimated 82.9 million buyers.

Despite the prevalence of counterfeits, 73% of holiday shoppers say they have never knowingly bought a counterfeit. But would they really know? Some consumers may feel they are too savvy to be fooled, but counterfeiters are getting more sophisticated. Where tell-tale signs like blurry photos or misspellings and grammatical mistakes used to tip off shoppers, AI-generated images and professional-looking online storefronts make fakes harder to distinguish.



Generation Fake?

Gen Z (39%) and Millennials (34%) are more likely to have purchased a counterfeit product from a social media platform as a gift compared to Gen X (26%) or Baby Boomers (15%).

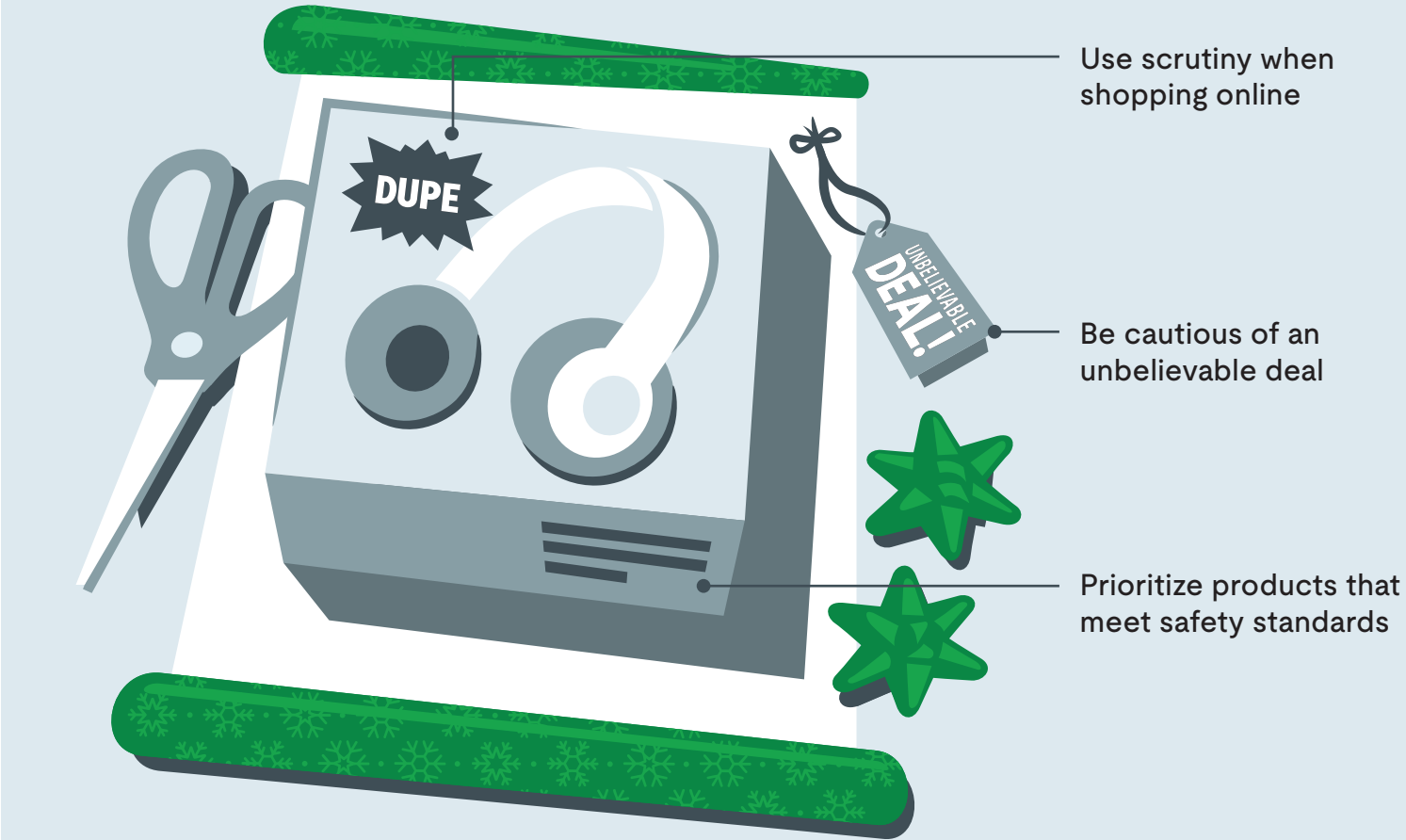


Katie Denis
Head of Communications,
UL Standards & Engagement

When shopping for electronics,
a lot of people

VIDEO
Too Good
to Be True?

This shopper ended up with more than she bargained for when she purchased a substandard gaming console.



Top Three Safety Tips



Be Cautious of an Unbelievable Deal

If a deal looks too good to be true, trust your gut. While there are lots of bargains to be found — from Black Friday to last-minute specials — too steep of a discount can be a clue that something is not right. Choose trusted retail websites and dig in on product reviews — especially those lower ratings — if you are unsure whether you are looking at a genuine product.



Use Scrutiny When Shopping Online

So much holiday shopping happens online, and counterfeiters are there to meet buyers: 70% of consumers who have purchased a counterfeit gift have bought it through an online source. Suspicious URLs, unusual payment options, and checking the product's details against the manufacturer's official website to spot inconsistencies can help protect you against dangerous fakes.



Prioritize Products that Meet Safety Standards

Look for certification marks that show a product has been tested to safety standards. These products have been through rigorous testing to help protect the safety of your home and family.

Decorating

A majority (62%) of Americans will decorate their homes with lights, trees, wreaths, menorahs, or all of the above this holiday season. In their pursuit of holiday glow, they may not make the safest decisions.

47% of those with artificial trees didn't check or aren't sure if they checked to see if the tree had a "Fire-Resistant" label



Top Three Safety Tips



Check for Damage and Overloading

More than 8 in 10 holiday decorators say they inspect lights (83%) and power cords (84%) for damage and check to make sure outdoor lighted decorations are rated for outdoor use (81%). Yet more than half (52%) admit to plugging multiple power strips or extension cords together to connect their lighted decorations — a process called “daisy-chaining” that can cause an electrical fire. Inspect lights, extension cords, and power strips for visible damage; make sure outlets and cords are not overloaded; and use timers or power off decorations when not at home or asleep.



Keep Decorations at a Safe Distance from Heat Sources

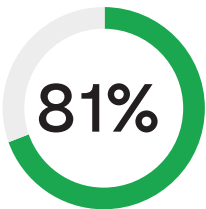
Christmas tree fires are a known risk. The vast majority (85%) of Americans who plan to put up a holiday tree opt for an artificial one. Worryingly, nearly half (47%) of those with artificial trees say they did not check or are not sure if they checked to see if the tree had a “Fire-Resistant” label on the package. Keep trees, garlands, and other décor at least three feet from heat sources like fireplaces and candles.



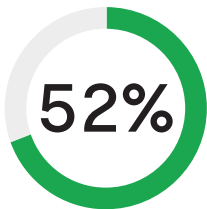
Use Decorative Products That Meet Standards

One of the best ways to make sure your decorations sparkle — not spark — is to use products that conform to safety standards, like artificial trees certified to UL 2358 that have been tested for response to fire or outdoor lighted decorations that meet UL 588 that have been through UV exposure and water immersion tests. Remember, though, that safety standards are based on common conditions — and those conditions do not include overloaded outlets or putting the Christmas tree mere inches from the fireplace.

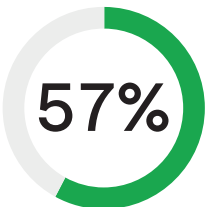
Explore survey findings and learn how ULSE standards help keep holiday decor sparkling, not sparking.



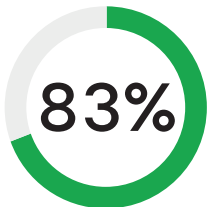
make sure outdoor lighted decorations are plugged into weatherproof outlets



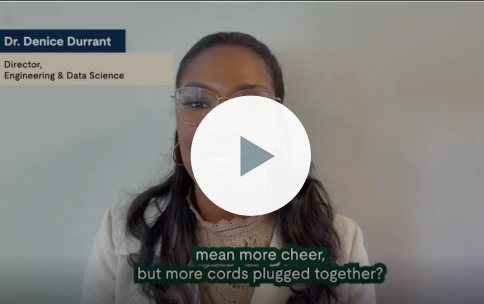
admit to daisy-chaining power strips or extension cords, which can cause an electrical fire



of holiday decorators check to see if lighted decorations are tested and certified by an accredited organization



of holiday decorators inspect lights for damage and another 84% inspect power cords



VIDEO
The Danger of Daisy-Chaining

Plugging multiple power strips or extension cords together to connect lighted decorations is actually a dangerous practice called “daisy-chaining” that can cause an electrical fire.



Through the Years...

In 1921, Underwriters Laboratories published the first edition of UL 588, the Standard for Seasonal and Holiday Decorative Products, which covered light strands for Christmas trees and similar holiday decorations. In that same year, First Lady Florence Harding announced she would have live flame candles placed in the windows of the White House for Christmas, reviving an old New England family tradition. However, the First Lady and President Warren Harding canceled those plans at the urging of UL General Agent George Muldaur, who feared not only the fire risk posed to the White House, but also the example it would set for people across the nation who might do the same and spark house fires.

Cooking

More than two-thirds (69%) of Americans plan to make a home-cooked holiday dinner or bake treats in the kitchen this season. Unfortunately, widely celebrated holidays correlate to [significant increases in home cooking fires](#). Thanksgiving shows the highest rate of increase, with 240% above the daily average of 430 home cooking fires. Christmas Eve is second at 72% higher than the daily average, closely followed by Christmas Day at 71% above average. Stay safe in the kitchen by having working safety equipment in place.



Top Three Safety Tips



Check Your Smoke Alarms

While you always want to prevent fires from starting, smoke alarms are a critical last line of defense — when they work. The vast majority (88%) of holiday home cooks have some form of smoke alarm near the kitchen. But more than one-third (35%) of holiday cooks admit to removing or disabling an alarm at some point — 9% of whom admitted to never reinstalling it — and another 62% who are not testing alarms monthly. Working smoke alarms that meet UL 217 should be tested monthly and batteries should be checked every six months.



Don't Forget About Carbon Monoxide Protection

While most holiday cooks said they have a smoke alarm near the kitchen, fewer than half (47%) said they had a carbon monoxide alarm. Carbon monoxide is found in fumes produced by furnaces, kerosene heaters, portable generators, and (important to know for holiday cooks) stoves and gas ranges. When these fumes occur, an alarm is often the first — and sometimes only — indication of a problem. Ensure CO alarms are present, working, regularly tested, and meet safety standards.



Pay Attention to Cooking & Have Extinguisher Ready

While a minority of holidays cooks admit to walking away while something is on the stove, even the most vigilant chef may experience a cooking fire. Three-fourths (75%) of holiday cooks say they have a fire extinguisher in or near their kitchens, yet that leaves a quarter (25%) who do not. Having a [fire extinguisher](#) (such as those tested to UL 711 or other ULSE standards for fire extinguishers) handy for small flames can help get it under control. But if the fire is too large or growing, get out of the house and call the fire department immediately. The [U.S. Fire Administration has a checklist](#) to help you know when to use a fire extinguisher vs. when to evacuate.

Explore survey findings and discover ULSE standards that help make feasts, not fire.

88%

of holiday home cooks have some form of smoke alarm near the kitchen

53%

of holiday home cooks do not have carbon monoxide alarms in the kitchen area

35%

of holiday cooks admit to removing or disabling a smoke alarm at some point

25%

of holiday cooks say they do not have a fire extinguisher in or near their kitchens



VIDEO
Preventing
False Alarms

Learn about the dangers of disabling a smoke alarm and how alarms certified to UL 217 can help reduce nuisance alarms.



10% admit to not testing or not knowing how to test their smoke alarm.

To [test smoke alarms](#), press and hold the test button. If a loud, piercing sound does not follow, that can indicate the alarm is not working. It also helps to know what the various “beeps” mean. A continuous, three-pulse beep is the signal to get out of the home. Just one periodic chirp means the battery is low.

Traveling

Holiday travel offers the chance to reunite with loved ones, escape winter weather, or enjoy festive activities such as skiing or visiting light displays. Regardless of the reason for travel, 30% of Americans — equivalent to an estimated 72 million people — say they plan to venture from home this season. Staying safe in transit, and while you are at your destination, will give you lasting memories of your experience that are merry, not scary.



47% of holiday travelers who are buying gifts are planning to pack their gifts in checked luggage

Top Three Safety Tips

Take Care of Batteries When You Fly



While most travelers will hit the road, 15% of travelers will go by plane to visit friends and family, and another 12% will fly to go on vacation this season. Those taking to the skies are likely bringing rechargeable devices powered by lithium-ion batteries — batteries that pose a fire risk if overcharged, mishandled, or substandard. Keeping rechargeable devices in arm's reach (and never in checked luggage) can support holiday flights landing safely and on time.

Ship Gifts Safely



It's not just people traveling this holiday season. Gifts are also logging miles, whether on Santa's sleigh or a delivery truck. Holiday travelers are planning on a wide array of approaches to get gifts to their recipients: ordering online for direct delivery (51%); packing them in carry-on (40%) or checked (47%) luggage; using shipping services (44%); and even shopping when they arrive (33%). If gifts rely on rechargeable batteries, pack them carefully, ensure they have a low state of charge (i.e. below 30%), follow all shipper regulations and guidelines, and never pack them in checked luggage.

Stay With Confidence



Traveling to hotels during the holidays should be part of a fun and festive experience. Carbon monoxide poisoning can turn celebration into tragedy, and detection is prevention. While 41% of Americans surveyed assume they are protected against CO in hotels and rental properties, most states do not require them to have CO alarms. Call ahead to determine if alarms are present, and consider bringing a portable alarm with you. Also know the warning signs of CO poisoning: headache, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, and confusion. If you suspect you have been exposed, exit the building and seek medical attention immediately.

Conclusion

The holidays are a special time. The gifting, decorating, cooking, and traveling traditions are core to what make them unique. It brings welcome changes to our behavior, and we want those changes to be made with confidence in safety.

Deck those halls. Make grandma's stuffing. Find the perfect gift. Fly to loved ones. Everything that makes the holidays enjoyable can happen more safely when we have awareness of the risks and can take reasonable steps to mitigate them.

At UL Standards & Engagement, we are always working for a safer world — during the holidays and all year long. We wish you a safe, joyful season and a happy New Year.



Methodology

This UL Standards & Engagement survey measures consumer understanding, behavior, and sentiment across four thematic areas related to the U.S. fall and winter holiday season — seasonal decorations, preparing holiday meals, gifting, and holiday travel.

This nationally representative survey of 2,019 U.S. adults was designed by ULSE and conducted online by BV Insights between September 8-14, 2025. The margin of sampling error for the September survey at 95% confidence for aggregate results is +/- 2.2%. Sampling error is larger for subgroups of the data.

Additional results on understanding of lithium-ion batteries were taken from a ULSE Insights U.S. consumer survey

series of a cumulative 12,080 U.S. adults, conducted between January 2024 and November 2024. The margin of sampling error at 95% confidence for aggregate results is +/- 0.89%. Sampling error is larger for subgroups of the data.

Additional results on perceptions around CO safety were taken from a ULSE Insights U.S. consumer survey of 2,012 U.S. adults from August 1-6, 2025. The margin of sampling error for the August survey at 95% confidence for aggregate results is +/- 2.2%. Sampling error is larger for subgroups of the data.

After survey data collection was completed, completed interviews were weighted by five variables: age, sex, geographic region, race, and education to ensure reliable

and accurate representation of the total U.S. population, 18 years of age and older.

As with any survey, sampling error is only one source of possible error. While non-sampling error cannot be accurately calculated, precautionary steps were taken in all phases of the survey design and the collection and processing of the data to minimize its influence.

Any population estimates are based on the U.S. online adult population estimated at 240.2 million using two sources of publicly available data: 2020 wave of the U.S. Census for U.S. adult population estimate of 258.3 million, and Pew Research Center's Internet/Broadband Fact Sheet which estimates 93% of U.S. adults use the internet, as of 2021.

About ULSE

UL Standards & Engagement is a nonprofit standards development and advocacy organization that translates safety science into practical, action-oriented standards, from toasters to life jackets, and lithium-ion batteries to solar power.

The organization also serves as a vital resource for policymakers and shares knowledge, advances partnerships, and advocates for standards and policies to create a safer, more sustainable world.



To learn more please visit **ULSE.org** or scan the QR code

Fast Facts:

1,700+
standards & documents in use today

4,000+
individuals serve on ULSE Technical Committees

40+
countries are represented through our Technical Committees

81
MOUs with agreements in several countries and regions

The only
standards development organization accredited in the U.S. and Canada, and authorized in Mexico



What is safety science?

Safety science engages ingenuity of top minds across scientific fields to engineer a safer and more sustainable world in which every individual can thrive.



How are standards developed?

UL Standards & Engagement convenes technical committees comprised of experts from manufacturing, government, academia, nonprofits, and other relevant groups to determine a standard. Technical committee members review proposals for new or revised standards and work together to achieve consensus through balloting in a fair and transparent process.



What is a standard?

A standard is a document of best practices for manufacturing and testing the safety, security, and sustainability of a product or system, developed and voted on by experts across industries and interests.



What happens after a standard is published?

All standards are free to view. Manufacturers and innovators can develop products, which can then be tested and certified that they conform to our standards to ensure they are as safe as possible. UL Standards & Engagement is continuously monitoring and revising standards to address a changing risk landscape and emerging technologies.

