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SAFETY LABEL ON ELECTRICAL PRODUCTS CAN SAVE LIVES

(Salem) The holiday season features many time-honored ceremonies and rituals. Take, for instance, the tradition of trying to separate tangled strings of festive, brightly colored lights – the ones you wadded into a ball and tossed into a box when you took them down last year – so that you can decorate your home with them.

State officials have some advice: When you get those strings of lights untangled (or when you give up and go to buy a new set) take a minute to look for a label confirming that the lights have been tested by a laboratory and meet standard requirements for electrical safety. If you can't find the label, don't use the lights.

Why is this important? Because if it doesn't have the label, it may not have been tested for safety. It may present an electric shock hazard for you, your family or your co-workers. And that can be a life or death issue.

These are familiar labels, because if you look you should find similar ones on pretty much every electrical product in your home or workplace – from household appliances to heating and air conditioning equipment, lighting fixtures, video and audio equipment, and anything that operates with an electric motor. The same rule applies: If you can't find the label, don't use the product.

The labeling requirement is part of the National Electrical Code for testing and listing of electrical products, so it applies to products sold throughout the country and is well-known to manufacturers. There are a number of laboratories approved to perform this testing and listing, including Underwriters Laboratories, MET Laboratories, Intertek Testing Services, and the Canadian Standards Association. A complete list of approved laboratories and the products they test is available on the Oregon Building Codes Division's Web site, at www.cbs.state.or.us/bcd or by calling 503-373-7509.

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