

Using Halogen Torchière Lamps Safely

Torchière style halogen floor lamps are freestanding, with an exposed light fixture mounted on top of a pole about six feet high. The inverted shade can act as a collection basin for combustible materials that become exposed to the extremely hot bulbs. Temperatures can reach up to 970°F for a 300-watt bulb and 1200°F for a 500-watt bulb. Since 1992, halogen torchière floor lamps have been linked to more than 100 fires and ten deaths, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission. Fires may occur if lamps are placed too close to curtains, bedding or other combustible materials, or if the lamp's bulb ruptures.

Underwriters' Laboratories issued a warning to manufacturers to stop selling the floor lamps with 500-watt halogen bulbs. After February, 1997, only lamps with 300-watt bulbs or less will be listed by Underwriters Laboratories. UL also introduced a new test for halogen bulbs. The lamps will now have to be able to be in use for seven hours without burning a double layer of cheesecloth which has been draped over the top. If any charring occurs, the bulb fails. Manufacturers of the halogen torchière lamps are developing new design features to keep combustible materials away from the bulb area, such as protective mesh covers or glass shields over the dish, deeper dishes, and air vents to dissipate the heat. In addition, new standards will require enhanced safety labeling to call attention to the hot bulbs.

Good as the new standard is, consumers will still encounter potentially hazardous situations. The newer, safer lamps can't be readily distinguished from the older lamps; both will carry safety warnings. The safest course to take for an older lamp is to discontinue using it and ask the retailer to accept its return. If you must keep the lamp, move it away from combustible furnishings and follow these safety tips, which were developed by UL and the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

- Before you use a halogen torchière lamp, carefully read all safety instructions, warnings and markings that accompany the product.
- Never place materials such as clothing or towels on the top of a torchière lamp.
- Never place a torchière lamp near an open window where a breeze could blow drapery onto the lamp.
- Avoid placing a torchière lamp in a location where it may be tipped over by children or pets.

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- Never use a torchière lamp in a child's bedroom or playroom. Children may play with lamps and knock them over. Children may also unknowingly place combustibles, such as stuffed toys or clothing, too close to the bulb area.
- Keep torchière lamps away from elevated beds, where bedding may get too close to the bulb.
- Always turn off or unplug the torchière lamp before removing or replacing the bulb.
- Never attempt to replace or discard a bulb that is hot to the touch.
- Never use a light bulb of a higher wattage than 300-watts, even though the lamp you own may specify 500-watts.
- Never operate any torchière lamp which has missing or damaged parts or components.
- Avoid leaving high-wattage (more than 100 watts) halogen torchière lamps on when you leave the room or when you are not at home.

For more information, contact your local Hartford agent or your Hartford Loss Control Consultant. Visit The Hartford's Loss Control web site at <http://www.thehartford.com/corporate/losscontrol/>

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