

December 12, 2003

Christmas Safety Tips:

The Christmas holiday season is a very exciting time. Many activities are conducted with family and friends that make this time very enjoyable. This season can also be stressful, with worries about how to get it all done and pay for it too. Here are some tips that will make your holiday safe:

Christmas Tree Safety:

- A real tree should not lose green needles when you tap it on the ground.
- Cut 1 inch off the trunk to help absorb water.
- Leave the tree outside until you are ready to decorate.
- The tree stand should hold at least 1 gallon of water.
- A 6 foot tree will use 1 gallon of water every two days.
- Check the water level every day.
- Secure the tree to keep it from falling.
- Keep the tree away from floor heaters, fire places, or other heat sources.
- Use only UL-listed lights and no more than 3 strands linked together.
- Turn off the Christmas lights when you sleep, or if you leave your home.
- Never use candles even on artificial trees.
- Never use electrical lights on a metallic tree. Use colored spot lights.
- Dispose of the tree properly.

Home Safety

- Install a smoke detector or new batteries in the one(s) you have and test it.
- Use only outdoor lights outside your home.
- Examine the light strings each year, discard worn ones.
- Fasten the bulbs securely and point the sockets down to avoid moisture build up.
- Never use indoor extension cords outside.
- Avoid overloading wall outlets and extension cords.
- Place candles in sturdy containers. Remember, hot wax burns kids.

- Extinguish candles prior to going to bed.
- Install at least one carbon monoxide detector in your home.
- Never burn wrapping paper in the fireplace—it could start a flash fire.
- Have an operable fire extinguisher readily available.

Safety Gift Ideas

- Three smoke detectors and batteries.
- A quality ABC fire extinguisher
- A flashlight and batteries or light sticks.
- A first-aid kit.
- A carbon monoxide detector.
- A mobile phone.
- A second floor escape ladder.
- An Emergency Kit – energy bars, water, battery radio, flashlight/light sticks and a first-aid kit packed in a small travel bag.

Children and Pets

- Poinsettias are known to be poisonous to humans and animals, so keep them well out-of-reach, or avoid having them.
- Keep decorations at least 6 inches above the child's reach.
- Avoid using tinsel. It can fall on the floor and a curious child or pet may eat it. This can cause anything from mild distress to death.
- Keep any ribbons on gifts and tree ornaments shorter than 7 inches. A child could wrap a longer strand of ribbon around their neck and choke.
- Avoid mittens with strings for children. The string can get tangled around the child's neck and cause them to choke. It is easier to replace a mitten than a child.
- Watch children and pets around space heaters or the fireplace. Do not leave a child or pet unattended.
- Store scissors and any sharp objects that you use to wrap presents out of your child's reach.
- Inspect wrapped gifts for small decorations, such as candy canes, gingerbread men, or mistletoe berries, all of which are choking hazards.

Security

- Don't carry large amounts of cash when shopping.
- Keep packages in your car out of sight.
- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Try to leave the mall in a group and not alone. Especially at night.
- Use your home burglar alarm system.
- If you plan to travel for the holidays don't discuss your plans with strangers.
- Have a trusted friend or neighbor to keep an eye on your home.

Safety Tip: **Be sure to practice safety and security during the holiday season. Home decorations should be purchased with fire safety in mind. Do not overload electrical circuits with ornamental lighting. And, in case you have never heard this one before, don't drink and drive.**

