

Originally Published: Sunday December 13, 2009

Make Safety a Holiday Priority



Winter has finally arrived. The ground is white and holiday entertaining and parties are under way. With the hustle and bustle of the season, it's important to remember to keep safety in mind.

Hospital emergency rooms treat approximately 8,000 people for injuries such as falls, cuts and shocks related to holiday lights, decorations and Christmas trees. Christmas trees are involved in about 400 fires annually, averaging more than \$15 million in property loss and damage.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission gives the following general safety tips:

- ◆ Plan for safety. There is no substitute for common sense. Look for and eliminate potential danger spots near candles, fireplaces, trees and electrical connections.
- ◆ Make an emergency plan to use if a fire breaks out anywhere in the home. See that each family member knows what to do. Practice the plan.
- ◆ Keep matches, lighters and candles out of the reach of children.
- ◆ Never burn candles near evergreens. Burning evergreens in the fireplace also can be hazardous. When dry, greens burn like tinder. Flames can flare out of control and send sparks flying into a room or up the chimney to ignite creosote deposits.
- ◆ Avoid smoking near flammable decorations.
- ◆ Do not burn papers in the fireplace. A flash fire may result as wrappings ignite suddenly and burn intensely.
- ◆ Avoid wearing loose, flowing clothes-particularly long, open sleeves-near open flames, such as those of a fireplace, stove or candlelit table.
- ◆ Turn off all lights on trees and other decorations when you go to bed or leave the house. Lights could short and start a fire.
- ◆ Use no more than three standard-size sets of lights per extension cord.

In homes with small children, take special care to:

- Avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food. A child could eat them.
- Keep trimmings with small, removable parts out of the reach of children. They could be swallowed or inhaled.
- Avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable.

If you need a last-minute gift, consider these:

Fire extinguisher ● bike helmet ● flashlight ● smoke detector ● keyboard wrist support ● safety whistle, emergency preparedness kit (for home, office or car) ● ear plugs and safety glasses (to go with power tools).

If your holiday plans include being away for the holidays, have a neighbor or friend check your home to help make sure it is safe.

Remember, safety is important all year and especially during the holidays with all the extra decorations and activity. Take the necessary steps to have a safe and enjoyable holiday season.

Lorene Bartos is an Extension educator with Lancaster County Extension of the University of Nebraska. She can be contacted at (402) 441-7180; 444 Cherrycreek Road, Lincoln, NE 68528; or lbartos1@unl.edu.

Posted in [Home-and-garden](#) on Saturday, December 12, 2009 11:15 pm Updated: 10:18 pm.