

# Holiday Season Safety

The National Safety Council offers these suggestions to help make your holiday season merry and safe.

## Decorations

Wear gloves while decorating with spun glass "angel hair." It can irritate your eyes and skin. A common substitute is non-flammable cotton. Both angel hair and cotton snow are flame retardant when used alone. However, if artificial snow is sprayed onto them, the dried combination will burn rapidly. When spraying artificial snow on windows or other surfaces, be sure to follow directions carefully. These sprays can irritate your lungs if you inhale them.

## Fireplaces

You should not try to burn evergreens or wreaths in the fireplace or in a wood stove to dispose of them. They are likely to flare out of control and send flames and smoke into the room. Also, do not burn wrapping paper in the fireplace because it often contains metallic materials which can be toxic if burned.

## Candles

Never use lighted candles near trees, boughs, curtains/drapes, or with any potentially flammable item.

## Toys and Gifts

Be especially careful when you choose toys for infants or small children. Be sure anything you give them is too big to get caught in the throat, nose or ears. Avoid toys with small parts that can be pulled or broken off. If you are giving toys to several children in one family, consider their age differences and the chances that younger children will want to play with older kids' toys.

## Older adults

Select gifts for older adults that are not heavy or awkward to handle. For persons with arthritis, make sure the gift does not require assembly and can be easily opened and closed. Choose books with large type for anyone with vision impairment.

## Plants

Small children may think that holiday plants look good enough to eat. But many plants can cause severe stomach problems. Plants to watch out for include: mistletoe, holly berries, Jerusalem cherry, and amaryllis. Keep all of these plants out of children's reach.

## Food and Cooking

The holidays often mean preparing large meals for family and friends. Wash hands, utensils, sink, and anything else that has come in contact with raw poultry. Keep in mind that a stuffed bird takes longer to cook. For questions concerning holiday turkey preparation and cooking call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-800-535-4555. Refrigerate or freeze leftovers in covered shallow containers (less than two inches deep) within two hours after cooking. Date the leftovers for future use.

## Alcohol, Parties and Driving

Being a smart party host or guest should include being sensible about alcoholic drinks. More than half of all traffic fatalities are alcohol-related. Use designated drivers, people who do not drink, to drive other guests home after a holiday party.

## Stress

The holiday season is one of the most stressful times of the year. You can't avoid stress completely, but you can give yourself some relief. Allow enough time to shop rather than hurry through stores and parking lots. Only plan to do a reasonable number of errands. When shopping, make several trips out to the car to drop off packages rather than trying to carry too many items. Take time out for yourself. Relax, read, or enjoy your favorite hobby at your own pace.

Source: <http://www.nsc.org/library/facts/holseasn.htm>

## From the U.S. Navy Safety Center:

Some 300 Christmas trees caught fire in one recent year, with electrical problems the most common culprit. Here's how to keep your tree green and your presents safe.

1. When you buy your tree, have the vendor make a fresh cut an inch from the bottom; this will help the tree drink.
2. If you buy your tree early and keep it outside, store it away from wind and sun, and keep the bottom in a bucket of water.
3. Make sure your lights are safe. If you need outdoor lights, make sure the ones you buy are meant for outdoor use. Make sure your lights carry certification from a testing laboratory.
4. Don't use electric lights on a metal tree.
5. Discard any strings of lights that are frayed or broken. Christmas lights are cheap.
6. Unplug your Christmas tree before you leave or go to bed.
7. Don't buy a tree that is dry and dropping needles. To check for freshness, loosely grip the end of a branch and pull your hand over it. Only a few needles should fall off.
8. Make sure your tree stand holds plenty of water, and don't let it run out.
9. If your tree seems wobbly, center it in the stand more securely and redo the bolts or screws. Of if your tree stand is cheap, buy a larger, stronger one.
10. If you buy an artificial tree, make sure it is fire-retardant.
11. Keep your tree at least three feet from furnaces, radiators and fireplaces.
12. try to position it near an outlet so that cords are not running long distances. Do not place the tree where it may block exits.
13. When Christmas is over or when the tree starts to drop needles, dispose of it. Don't leave it in your house or put it in your garage.
14. Keep a close eye on small children when they are around the tree; many small decorations and ornaments are sharp, breakable and can be swallowed.

Source: <http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil/safetips/christmastree.htm>