



Holiday Safety

From now until New Year's Day there are all sorts of things to celebrate. Unfortunately, decorations, food, and alcohol all present dangers, particularly to young children. A few common-sense precautions can help keep your holidays safe and happy.



Candles, colored lights, Christmas trees, artificial snow, and plants add a lot of beauty to festive occasions. Unfortunately, young children (pets too!) often like to play with these. Kids may even try to taste these lovely decorations, or experiment with that candle flame. Make sure decorations are kid-safe or out of reach. Watch out for small ornaments, button batteries, and festive yet poisonous plants such as mistletoe, poinsettia, and Jerusalem cherry. 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. Candles are also popular, but don't let yours go up in smoke! Speaking of candles, have you ever let one get too close to some greenery, paper, or a tablecloth? You know what can happen. Keep an eye on those candles. Never leave them burning unattended, and never place them too close to other objects. (Light candles only in containers meant for lighted candles - - many candles are not meant to be lit in their original, usually decorative, containers.) Keep those lighters and matches out of children's reach, too.

If you use outdoor lights, make sure they're approved for outdoor use. For indoor and outdoor lights, inspect them for broken or missing bulbs, and check the cords for fraying before you use them. Don't place cords where they can trip people, and don't run them under furniture, rugs, carpeting or other objects, or around doors and windows.

A crackling fire in the fireplace is a welcome sight. Keep yours safe. Make sure the fireplace and chimney are clean when begin using it each year. Call a professional to clean and inspect your flue. Keep the area in front of the fireplace free of combustible material, and use a screen to keep sparks from flying out. Again, keep young children and pets away from the fireplace. 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.

Be especially careful when you give toys to infants or small children. Be sure anything you give them is safe. 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



choose toys for infants or small children. too big to get caught in the throat, nose or can be pulled or broken off. If you are family, consider their age differences and will want to play with older kids' toys.

There's plenty to eat during the holiday season. Unfortunately eating food that isn't prepared right or that has been sitting around too long can turn happiness into misery. Foodborne illness can make you very sick. It can also kill. You should always be aware of food safety precautions and follow them no matter what time of year. If you are hosting a celebration, be sure to follow safe handling, cooking, and reheating practices, especially for meats and eggs. These precautions can usually be found printed on the food packages and in published literature, such as cookbooks or health department brochures. For questions concerning holiday turkey preparation and cooking call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-800-535-4555. Don't take a chance by eating food that is not fully cooked, seems to have been sitting out too long, or that contains raw eggs - - not even cookie dough! The risk of serious illness is just not worth it.

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.

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.



Have a most happy and safe holiday season !