

Safety Bugle

Today's Topic: Holiday Safety



As the holiday season approaches we should all take a minute to think about safety during the Holidays. Every year thousands of people are injured or killed due to faulty Holiday decorations. Careful planning of your holiday decorations can help prevent any needless injuries.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, four out of every seven US home fires occur between December and February each year. Using candles and overloading electrical circuits cause about half of these fires.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission approximately 1,300 people are treated each year in emergency departments for injuries related to holiday lights, and another 6,200 people are treated for injuries related to other holiday decorations, including trees.

Fireplaces:

Fireplaces are very popular during the holidays. Before starting a fire, make sure you remove all decorations from the area and be sure that the flu is open. Do not burn wrappings or evergreen boughs. These can burn extremely fast, throwing off sparks and burning debris. Safely dispose of wrapping paper with your normal trash collection.



Holiday Trees:

When buying a natural tree, the most important safety precaution is freshness. The higher the moisture content the less likely it is to dry out and become a fire hazard. Check for freshness by examining the needles. Bend them between your fingers. They shouldn't break. Tap the tree gently on a firm surface, if many needles fall off, the tree is too dry. You can't depend on the color of the tree, many are sprayed green. To keep your tree fresh longer, cut off two inches of the trunk and place it in a sturdy water holding stand with wide spread legs. Place the tree away from fireplaces, kerosene heaters, wall furnaces and other heat sources. Keep watering your tree. You should not block stairs or doorways. Dispose of the tree when needles begin to fall off in large quantities.

DECORATING SAFETY

Artificial Trees:

Artificial trees should bear the UL label. Never use electric lights on metal trees like the old silver trees. Plastic trees should be made of fire resistant material. This does not mean that the tree will not burn, but only that it will not catch fire easily. Keep artificial trees away from heat sources. It's always a good idea to turn off any electrical decorations on both live and artificial trees whenever you leave your home.

Lights:

Use only approved UL lighting. Inspect electric lights for broken or cracked sockets and frayed wires, replace if necessary. Never use lighted candles on or near a tree or other decorations. All lights should be securely fastened to the tree. No bulbs should come in contact with needles or branches. Outdoor lights should be weatherproof and clearly identified as designed for outdoor use. Remove outdoor lighting as soon as the season is over. Even outside lights are not designed to withstand prolonged exposure to winter weather.

Tree Ornaments and Trimming:

Avoid placing small or breakable ornaments on lower branches where children or pets can reach them and knock them off. Every year many children are treated for cuts from broken ornaments, or from swallowing broken pieces and small parts.

Poisonous Decorations:

Beware of toxic decorations. Mistletoe and holly berries may be poisonous if more than a few are swallowed. Fire Salts (which produce a multicolored effect when thrown on burning wood) contain heavy metals, which if swallowed may cause serious gastrointestinal problems and vomiting. If your child consumes any of these substances, immediately call your physician or the "Poison Control Center" for your state.

Personal Safety:

Unfortunately, this time of year is also has the highest crime rates, theft being at the top of the list. So here are a few tips to help protect yourself and your loved ones.

Stop, Look, Listen! That is one of the biggest mistakes we all make every day! Be aware of your surroundings.

Have Your Keys Ready: When leaving a store always make sure you know where you had parked your vehicle and have those keys in your hand.

- **Don't Go Alone:** When you intend on shopping at night, be sure you have a friend or relative come along. If you do find yourself alone when leaving a store, ask the security guard to walk you to your car. That is what they are there for!
- **Hold On To Your Money:** Always carry your purse tucked tightly under your arm ladies. And for you men out there...it can happen to you too! Put your money and only necessary cards in your front trouser pocket, it's too hard on a bad guy to get at it.

SAFETY TIPS FOR SMALL CHILDREN

Be Careful With Small Objects: Children eat the darndest things! Decorations although beautiful, can be dangerous to a toddler. They can choke on tinsel, small ornaments, ornament hangers and the like. Put these items up higher than their reach.

Candles: Fire is always something that amazes a child. Never leave them unattended where candles are burning, not for a moment! This goes for simmering potpourri containers as well.