



MSU-ES Dawg Tracks

December, 2011

Holiday Safety Tips



Well! Where did 2011 go? It seems like we were just returning from Christmas 2010 and here we are getting ready for Christmas 2011. Time flies when you are happy. We have so many blessings for our quality of life and the greatest country in the world. As we enter the blessed Christmas season, we all should remember from whence it cometh and remain conscious of this time and season. Did you know:

- An estimated 128,700 fires in December account for 415 deaths and 1, 650 injuries, resulting in over \$900 million dollars in damages.
- In December, 72 percent of structure fires occur in residential buildings.
- The leading cause of December residential structure fires involves cooking.
- Christmas decorations, trees, etc., add ignition to the incidence of holiday fires.

Following are some tips that we should follow and pass on that will aid in reducing the potential to be part of these statistics:

PREVENTING CHRISTMAS TREE FIRES -

- One of the hazards of Christmas trees is the fact that they can become engulfed in flames in a matter of minutes, filling the room with fire and toxic gases.
- When selecting a live tree, check to be sure that the needles are vibrantly green and hard to pull off the branches. A good test is to shake the tree with the trunk hitting the ground. If needles drop off then this is a pretty good sign that the tree is drying out.
- Locating your tree should be away from heat sources, including fireplaces or heater vents. The recommended time for having a live tree out is two weeks and you must keep the stand reservoir full of water.
- When disposing the tree, take it to the recycling center or on your curb for the city or county to pick it up. In our area, many municipalities have a collection point to bring them in and the sanitation department will dispose of them - or in some cases, they have curb pickup.

HOLIDAY LIGHTS -

- Inspect your lights each year for burned out bulbs, cuts or abrasion in the wiring and broken or cracked sockets. Use lighting that has a reputable testing laboratory approval.
- Do not link more than three strands of lights unless the directions indicate that it is safe for more than three. Check the cord for heat resulting from possible overload.
- Do not leave any holiday lights unattended.

HOLIDAY DECORATIONS -

- All decorations should be nonflammable or flame-retardant and placed away from heat vents.
- Refrain from putting wrapping paper in the fireplace, as it can result on a large fire, throwing off sparks and embers which could cause a large chimney fire.
- If you have an artificial or metallic tree – make sure that it is flame-retardant.
- Avoid placing small or breakable ornaments on lower branches where small kids or dogs can knock them off. Every year, children are treated for cuts from broken ornaments or swallowing broken pieces.

CANDLE CARE -

- The U.S. Fire Association recommends not using lit candles - but if you do - you should have them in stable candle holders and never leave the house with them burning.
- Refrain from using lit candles on your tree. Do not go near a Christmas tree with an open flame, whether it is candles, lighters or matches.

PERSONAL SAFETY TIPS -

Christmas and the New Year's Day holidays unfortunately are the season with the highest crime rates. Theft is #1 on the list, so check out these tips for your personal safety:

- ✓ **Stop-Look-Listen** - Be aware of your surroundings. This is one of the biggest mistakes made in the holiday season. Watch out around your area.
- ✓ **Have your keys ready** - When you leave a store make sure you know where you parked your vehicle and make sure that you have your keys in your hand.
- ✓ **Don't go it alone** - If you plan night shopping trips, try to have a friend or family member with you. If this isn't possible, when you leave the store, ask a security guard or an employee to accompany you to your car.
- ✓ **Hold on to your money** – Ladies should always carry purses tightly tucked under arms. Men should keep billfolds or money clips in front pockets. It's harder to get out than in the back pocket.

TIPS FOR SMALL CHILDREN -

- Be careful with small objects. Children tend to eat the craziest things. They can choke on tinsel, small ornaments, ornament hangers, etc.
- Glass balls & other glass decorations – keep these types of decorations out of reach of small children.

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