

MAFES Dawg Tracks

December 20, 2010 - Special



*Christmas Holiday
Safety Tips*



Well, where did the year 2010 go? It seems that we were just starting 2010 and now it's almost gone and the Christmas holidays are fast approaching us again. This isn't about agriculture, but just as important - because if you return from the holidays safe and sound, part of our mission will be accomplished in keeping you and your family safe.

The United States Consumer Product Safety Commission states that the hospital emergency room sees some 12,500 people last year. These injuries range from falls, cuts and shocks (related to holiday lights) decorations and Christmas trees. Additionally, candles start about 11,600 fires each year, resulting in 150 deaths, 1,200 injuries and \$173 million in property loss. Christmas trees are involved in about 300 fires each year, resulting in 10 deaths, 30 injuries and over \$10 million in property loss and damage.

With these statistics in mind, we need to review some safety tips that might just help save some of us from being one of these statistics.

TIPS FOR HOLIDAY SAFETY:

Trees-

- When purchasing an artificial tree, be sure that it is labeled "fire-resistant."
- When purchasing a "live tree," be sure that it is a fresh one. A real green one with the needles hard to pull out from the limbs and won't break between the fingers. The trunk will be sticky with resin and when you bump it on the ground, the needles won't fall out.
- When setting up the tree at home, be sure that its location is away from heat sources and not in traffic aisles.
- When you are preparing the tree, cut a few inches off the trunk to expose fresh wood. This will allow better water absorption and help to keep the tree from drying out.
- Be sure to keep the stand tank filled with water. Heated rooms will hasten the drying of real trees.

Lights-

- Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. If you should have faulty lights with a short occurring, and a person touches the tree, he or she will get shocked instantly.
- For outside lights, be sure to check the label to verify that they are made for outdoor use.
- Check all lights before hanging them to see that the bulbs work and the cords aren't frayed or broken.
- Plug all outside decorations into Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters.

- Do not leave home or go to bed at night without unplugging all lights.

Decorations-

- Use only non-combustible or flame-resistant materials to decorate the tree.
- Refrain from using candles to light the tree or using them around any live evergreen. Keep candles out of reach of small children.
- In homes with small children, avoid using decorations with sharp edges or that are breakable. Keep decorations with small parts out of reach of the small children.
- Remove all flammable paper and other flammable decorations to keep children from swallowing them.

Fireplaces-

- Be careful when using "fire salts" on wood fires. They contain heavy metals that can cause intestinal irritation and vomiting if eaten.
- Do not burn wrapping paper or decorative boxes, because they can cause flash fires and burn intensely.

General Rules for Holiday Safety-

- Keep matches, lighters and candles out of children's reach.
- Avoid smoking near flammable decorations.
- Make an emergency plan for use in case a fire breaks out anywhere in the home. Before Christmas season, sit with all family members and reorient each one with the plan. A good idea to go along with the orientation is to actually do a walk-through practice run each year to familiarize each family member with the plan and routes of egress.
- Avoid loose fitting clothes around fireplaces, candle-lit tables and stoves.
- As mentioned earlier, refrain from burning live candles around evergreens. Do not burn evergreens in the fireplace. Dry evergreens burn fast and intensely, which could cause sparks to be thrown out and set your house on fire.
- Plan for safety. Look for potential trouble spots and hazards.

The Holiday season is a special time for families and children, so take a little time to focus on the safety aspects for a safe and enjoyable time of the year.

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www.rd.com/ChristmasSafety

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