



MAFES Dawg Tracks

December 22, 2014



*Christmas & Holiday
Safety Tips*



It sounds like a broken record. 2014 seems like last week we were returning from 2013 Holidays. And here are thinking about the holiday season with 2015 creeping up on us!

You've read the statistics in the next paragraph before, but I want to use them as a grim reminder of not being cognizant of the ills of the Christmas season, if we don't remain focused on staying safe.

FACTS FROM THE CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION-

- ✓ Every year hospital emergency rooms treat about 12,500 people with injuries from falls, cuts, and shocks from holiday lights, decorations and Christmas trees.
- ✓ Candles start about 11,600 fires, resulting in 150 deaths, 1,200 injuries and \$173 million dollars in property losses.
- ✓ Christmas trees alone are involved in about 300 fires, resulting in 10 deaths, 30 injuries and an average of \$10 million in property losses.

As you are preparing your homes for the holiday season, keep an eye out for these holiday slip-ups or safety snafus:

- **Merry & Bright** – Carefully inspect all your strings of holiday lights each year; discard the ones with frayed cords, cracked bulb holders, or loose connections. When you are changing bulbs, be sure to check the voltage and wattage of the original bulbs.
- **Lights Out** – Always turn out all the holiday lights when you leave the home and at bedtime.
- **Fresh is Best** – Always try to purchase a freshly cut tree, as they are more resistant to ignition. Keep your tree watered daily and away from live candles.
- **Timing is everything** – Use an outdoor certified by CSA International to regulate your lights on and off. Lights should be turned on after 7:00 pm to conserve electricity in the high peak time.
- **Check for the Certification Mark** – When purchasing light strings, extension cords, spotlights, electrical decorations, gas appliances or other electrical items, be sure that they have come from an accredited source, like CSA International, UL or ETL. This will ensure that the products have originated from reputable manufacturers with standards for safety and performance.
- **One & Done** – Do not ever connect more than one extension cord together; instead use a single cord that is long enough to reach the outlet without stretching but not so long that one might get tangled in it.
- **The Great Outdoors** – When hanging outdoor lights, be sure to keep the connectors off the ground and away from metal rain gutters. Use plastic clips or insulated tape instead of metal nails or tacks to hold them in place.
- **Climbing up** – Use a ladder when you put up lights. Use the correct ladder for the tasks and check it for broken or bent parts as well as being sure that it is from an acceptable manufacturer and has acceptable standards.

- **Keep the Gas Behind Glass** – Do not use your gas fireplace if the glass is removed, cracked or broken - and only a qualified service person to replace the fireplace parts.
- **Sound the Alarm** – Test your smoke alarms monthly to make sure they work and be sure to install smoke and carbon monoxide alarms (CO) alarms on every level of your home.
- **Filter-Friendly Furnace** – To help prevent (CO) hazards in your home, have a qualified contractor perform a yearly maintenance check of the furnace and venting system. Also to clean or replace the filters in your furnace periodically during the heating season.
- **Clean the Clutter** – Do not store combustible materials such as gasoline, propane, paper, chemicals, paint, rags and cleaning products near the gas furnace. Gasoline or propane cylinders should be stored outside of the home.

HOLIDAY SHOPPING SAFETY-

- Whenever it is possible, do your shopping during daylight hours and with a “buddy” is even better, especially for night time.
- Avoid wearing jewelry when you go shopping. Avoid large sums of money and try to use debit or credit cards as opposed to paying in cash.
- Park in well-lit areas that are well-traveled. When you return to your vehicle, look in the back and front seats before opening the door to be sure that there are no strangers inside.
- If you start to your car and see a strange person there, return to the mall or shopping area and try to get a contact person to go with you or wait in the shopping area until the stranger leaves.
- Beware of vans or wagons that might be parked close to your vehicle. These are used by criminals to abduct innocent people.
- In malls- avoid dark hallways or back door areas- especially at closing time. Avoid bathrooms that aren't in well-traveled areas.
- Guard your debit and credit cards with the same level of security that you do with cash.
- If you withdraw money from an ATM, do with the company of a “buddy” and also in a well-lit location. Also, if you see someone “hanging” around the ATM, wait for them to leave or find another machine.
- Inside a mall, avoid dark corners, hallways and back door areas.
- If you have to have cash instead of “plastic,” carry your money in your front pocket or other more secure areas on your body. Refrain from wearing expensive jewelry.
- If, by chance, you encounter “would-be-thief,” throw your purse in the opposite direction of where he is standing and run like the devil away. Chances are that he wants money and not you.

**INVEST IN TOMORROW
PRACTICE SAFETY TODAY
BE SAFE > NOT SORRY!!!**