

# Holiday Safety Tips

## Decorating Safety

- Never use lighted candles near trees, boughs, curtains/drapes, or with any potentially flammable item.
- Wear gloves while decorating with spun glass “angel hair.” It can irritate your eyes and skin. A common substitute is non-flammable cotton.
- 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.
- Small children may think that holiday plants look good enough to eat, but many plants may be poisonous or can cause severe stomach problems. Plants to watch out for include: mistletoe, holly berries, Jerusalem cherry and amaryllis. Keep all of these plants out of children’s reach.
- When displaying a tree, cut off about two inches off the trunk and put the tree in a sturdy, water-holding stand. Keep the stand filled with water so the tree does not dry out quickly.
- Stand your tree away from fireplaces, radiators and other heat sources. Make sure the tree does not block foot traffic or doorways.
- Avoid placing breakable tree ornaments or ones with small, detachable parts on lower branches where small children or pets can reach them.
- If you use an artificial tree, choose one that is tested and labeled as fire resistant. Artificial trees with built-in electrical systems should have the Underwriters Laboratory (UL) label.
- Only use indoor lights indoors (and outdoor lights only outdoors). Look for the UL label. Check lights for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, and loose connections. Replace or repair any damaged light sets.
- Use no more than three light sets on any one extension cord. Extension cords should be placed against the wall to avoid tripping hazards, but do not run cords under rugs, around furniture legs or across doorways.
- Turn off all lights on trees and decorations when you go to bed or leave the house. Unplug extension cords when not in use.
- If using a natural tree, make sure it is well watered to avoid dry branches from catching fire from the heat of light bulbs.
- When displaying outdoor lights, fasten them firmly to a secure support with insulated staples or hooks to avoid wind damage. Never nail, tack or stress wiring when hanging lights and keep plugs off the ground away from puddles and snow.

## Ladder Safety

- When putting up holiday decorations, always use the proper step stool or ladder to reach high places. Don’t stand on chairs, desks or other furniture.
- If you have to use a step ladder near a doorway, lock or barricade the door and post signs so no one will open it and knock you off the ladder.
- A straight or extension ladder should be placed one foot away from the surface it rests against for every four feet of ladder height.
- When you climb, always face the ladder and grip the rungs to climb – not the side rails. Always keep three points of contact on the ladder whether two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand.

- When climbing, keep your hips between the side rails and do not lean too far or overreach. Reposition the ladder closer to the work instead.
- Use ladders with slip-resistant feet and wear clean, dry and slip-resistant shoes when climbing a ladder.
- When using ladders outdoors, get down immediately if high winds, rain, snow or other inclement weather begins.  
Winds can blow you off the ladder and rain or snow can make both the rungs and the ground slippery.

### **Hosting and Food Safety**

- When preparing a holiday meal for friends and family be sure to wash hands, utensils, sink, and anything else that has come in contact with raw poultry. Keep in mind that a stuffed bird takes longer to cook.
- Never defrost food at room temperature. Thaw it in the refrigerator, in cold water or in the microwave.
- While doing holiday cooking, keep your knives sharp. Most knife injuries occur due to dull blades.
- Use a clean food thermometer to cook foods to a safe internal temperature before serving.
- Avoid cleaning kitchen surfaces with wet dishcloths or sponges. They easily harbor bacteria and promote bacteria growth. Use clean paper towels instead.
- When reheating leftovers, bring the temperature up to at least 165°F to eliminate any bacterial growth.
- Refrigerate or freeze leftovers in covered shallow containers (less than two inches deep) within two hours after cooking. Date the leftovers for future use.
- 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 for gifts and meal items rather than hurry through stores and parking lots. Only plan to do a reasonable number of errands.

### **Winter Vehicle Preparation**

- Prepare your car for the winter by checking items such as the brakes, spark plugs, battery, and tires. Check your owner's manual for the recommended interval for a tune-up.
- Be prepared for emergency situations on the road by having a winter "survival kit" in the vehicle including items such as, a working flashlight, extra batteries, reflective triangles, compass, first aid kit, exterior windshield cleaner, ice scraper, snow brush, wooden stick matches in a waterproof container, and non-perishable, high energy foods like unsalted canned nuts, dried fruits, and hard candy.

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