

# *Holiday Safety Tips*

*Sponsored by the Office of Environment, Safety and Health*





*December is here, and now  
that the Holiday Season is upon  
us, we all look forward to time and  
fellowship with family and friends.  
The Office of Environment, Safety  
and Health would like to share  
some tips and ideas, to help make  
this joyous season a safe and  
happy one for you and your  
loved ones.*

# ***Safe Highway Holiday Travel***

- ◆ **Daytime travel is safer.**
- ◆ **Know your route.**
- ◆ **Let a friend or family member know your route and expected arrival time.**
- ◆ **Carry a cell phone and look for emergency phone number instructions on highways in individual states.**
- ◆ **Maintain your vehicle in good condition, and ensure at least 1/4 tank of fuel at all times.**
- ◆ **Carry emergency supplies if adverse weather is expected.**
- ◆ **Lock doors, and keep windows closed when driving and parking your vehicle.**



## ***Safe Holiday Shopping***

- ◆ Shop with friends or relatives when possible.
- ◆ Dress comfortably, conservatively, and present an alert appearance.
- ◆ Watch children closely.
- ◆ Carry minimal cash and wear minimal jewelry.
- ◆ Credit and debit cards are safer than carrying cash.
- ◆ Visit only well-lit ATMs in populated areas; drive up ATMs are usually safer.
- ◆ Grip purse and purchased items firmly.
- ◆ Lock items in trunk.
- ◆ When approaching your vehicle, scan area for suspicious people or activities - go back to shopping area to seek assistance if necessary.
- ◆ Report suspicious activities, crimes, vehicles, or persons to local law enforcement.



# Safe Tree Decorating

- ♦ Fresh live trees should have sticky resin present on the cut end of trunk, and needles that bend, but do not break.
- ♦ Secure in a sturdy stand, and check daily for adequate water.
- ♦ Decorate with non-combustible or flame-resistant items.
- ♦ If children or pets are present:
  - Keep small decorations near top of tree to prevent choking or inhaling.
  - Avoid sharp or breakable ornaments.
  - Avoid trimmings that look like candy or food.
- ♦ Follow manufacturer's directions on safe use of artificial "spray snow."
- ♦ Wear gloves if decorating with spun glass "angel hair."
- ♦ Never use electric lights on metallic trees.
- ♦ Use lighting timers when possible.
- ♦ Turn off lights when not at home.
- ♦ Never use lighted candles on trees or near evergreen decorations.



# Safe Holiday Light Decorating



- ◆ Use only Underwriters' Laboratories (UL) or Factory Mutual (FM) labeled lights.
- ◆ Inspect new and old strings of lights for frayed or damaged cords. Discard damaged light strings.
- ◆ Unplug lights to change bulbs.
- ◆ Do not overload circuits.
- ◆ Use no more than three strings of lights per extension cord.
- ◆ String outdoor lights through hooks or insulated staples, not tacks or nails.
- ◆ Do not pull or tug light strings to hang or remove.



## ***Candle Safety Tips***

- ◆ Place candles in durable, stable, non-combustible holders.
- ◆ Keep lighted candles away from flammable decorations or curtains.
- ◆ Check burning candles frequently to be sure they can't drip hot wax accidentally, or burn down too far.
- ◆ Keep candles, matches, and lighters away from small children.
- ◆ Extinguish candles when leaving home or going to sleep.
- ◆ Never leave a burning candle in an empty room.



Office of Environment, Safety and Health  
POC: Claudia Beach, 301-913-6636 or [Claudia.Beach@eh.doe.gov](mailto:Claudia.Beach@eh.doe.gov)

# Children's Toy and Gift Safety



- Select toys suited to the age and interests of the child.
- Remember that smaller children will try to play with toys of older siblings and friends, so choose older children's toys with the younger child in mind as well.
- Read instructions carefully before allowing your child to play with toys.
- Avoid toys for younger children that must be plugged into an electrical outlet.
- Avoid choking or strangulation risks:
  - Toys for children age 3 or under should not be less than 1 1/4 inches in diameter, and 2 1/4 inches long - no smaller than a toilet tissue tube diameter.
  - Get rid of uninflated or popped balloons, and plastic wrap or packaging.
  - Remove ribbons and strings.
  - Strings on pull toys should be shorter than 12 inches.
  - Check toys for broken or damaged parts.
- Immediately dispose of, or remove to a safe place opened gift wrappings, ribbons, and bows.





## **Food Safety**

- ◆ Cook meats, seafood, and poultry thoroughly.
- ◆ Thaw meat and poultry in the refrigerator.
- ◆ Wash surfaces, utensils, and sinks where raw meat, fish, or chicken have been prepared.
- ◆ Keep raw food separate from cooked foods.
- ◆ Wash fruits and vegetables well.
- ◆ Food requiring refrigeration should not be left out at room temperature more than 2 hours.
- ◆ Refrigerate or freeze leftovers within 2 hours.
- ◆ Always wash a utensil used to taste food before placing back into the food.
- ◆ Keep hot liquids and foods away from stove and table edges.
- ◆ Wash hands frequently.
- ◆ Encourage children to wash hands frequently for the period of time they can sing "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star", or "Itsy-Bitsy Spider."
- ◆ For questions concerning holiday turkey preparation and cooking, call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-800-535-4555.



## **Holiday Plant Safety**

- ◆ Keep evergreens away from heat sources.
- ◆ Do not smoke near evergreen decorations.
- ◆ Consider flame-proofing by flocking or other treatment.
- ◆ Keep holly berries, Christmas cactus, Jerusalem cherry, amaryllis, and mistletoe away from children and pets.
- ◆ Poinsettias are considered safe. If ingested by a child, it may cause an upset stomach. Ingestion by a pet will make it very sick. Seek medical care.
- ◆ Remove live trees, cuttings, and evergreens as soon as practical after holidays.
- ◆ Keep the poison hotline number handy in case of emergency (800-222-1222).



## ***Safe Parties and Visiting***

- ♦ Clean up after a party immediately to avoid the risk that small, unattended children may wake early, and possibly choke on leftover food, or get into alcohol or tobacco.
- ♦ All homes are not child proof, so when visiting, keep an eye out for child hazards or danger areas.
- ♦ Keep a current list of important phone numbers handy for baby sitters, including pediatrician, and the poison control center (1-800-222-1222).
- ♦ Keep guns and ammunition locked separately and safely away. Ask your host to do the same, especially if you have small children.
- ♦ Small children need to be kept to their usual schedules and routines as much as possible.
- ♦ Sticking to a regular sleep and nap time helps the child and you enjoy the holidays with less stress.
- ♦ Use designated drivers to take people home safely after a party.



# ***Managing Holiday Stress***

- ◆ Set reasonable goals for shopping and errands.
- ◆ Don't overload yourself carrying purchased items. Make several trips to your car rather than try to carry too many packages at once.
- ◆ Stick to your budget! Make a list and follow it exactly.
- ◆ Don't over-schedule yourself or your family.
- ◆ Maintain your exercise schedule.
- ◆ Don't let others' expectations or demands cause you to sacrifice your personal standards.
- ◆ Try to keep a sense of humor.



# Fireplace Safety

- ◆ Have fireplace and chimney checked and cleaned professionally each year.
- ◆ Be sure the flue is open before lighting a fire.
- ◆ Make sure fireplace safety screens and doors are closed when the fire is lit.
- ◆ "Fire salts" produce colored flames when tossed on wood fires. These items contain heavy metals that can be very dangerous to children or pets if ingested. Do not inhale the smoke from these products.
- ◆ Do not burn evergreens or wreaths in the fireplace, as they can flare out of control.
- ◆ Flash fires can occur when gift wrapping or papers are burned in fireplaces. Gift wrappings can also contain dangerous metals that when burned can be toxic if inhaled.



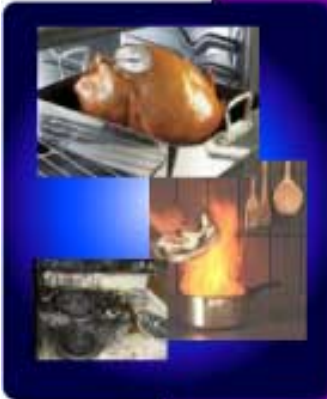
# Older Adults Gifts

- ♦ Keep the older adult's physical and mental capabilities in mind when choosing gifts.
- ♦ Choose books with larger type for those with visual impairments.
- ♦ Select gifts that are not too heavy or awkward to handle.
- ♦ Gifts for those with arthritis should not require challenging assembly.
- ♦ Gifts for arthritics should be wrapped for easy opening.
- ♦ Some ideas might be:
  - Framed photos of family or friends, gift certificates for beauty or barber shop, prepaid telephone card, automatic turn-off teapot, large print calendar, crossword puzzles or magazine subscriptions, audio books, extended shoe horn, telephone amplifier, jar opener, video tape of family gatherings, automatic timer for lights, CD or tape player.



# Holiday Kitchen Safety

- Clean stove surfaces, ovens, and other appliances after every use, and especially after a spill.
- Dress safely around stoves - tight-fitting sleeves, long hair pinned up, and no hair spray.
- When cooking is complete, turn off stoves and appliances promptly.
- Unplug when not in use.
- Do not overload circuits.
- Do not leave dish towels and pot holders on a cooking surface.
- Curtains should be 3 feet from cooking surfaces and appliances.
- Turn handles away from the edge of the cooking surface to prevent spills or a child grabbing them.
- In microwaves, use only approved cooking containers.
- Keep a working fire extinguisher in the kitchen for grease fires.
- Never throw water on a cooking fire!
- Should a pan catch fire:
  - Use an oven mitt to carefully put a lid over the pan
  - Turn off the burner
  - Allow the pan to cool completely before removing the lid or moving the pan
- Oven fire:
  - Close the oven door, and leave it closed
  - Turn off the oven if it is safe to reach the on/off switch/knob
  - If the fire does not go out immediately, call the Fire Department
- Never leave cooking or baking items unattended!



# Healthy Holiday Eating

- ♦ Set yourself up to succeed - don't try to diet during the holidays - just maintain your weight.
- ♦ Savor the flavor! Eat slowly.
- ♦ Pre-plan healthy meals and snacks, and stick to the plan.
- ♦ Have the healthy snacks within easy reach!
- ♦ Substitute fruits for fast foods on hectic days.
- ♦ Have small portions of holiday favorites such as eggnog and desserts.
- ♦ Beware of food additives such as butter and cream in soups, and sugar and syrup in desserts and specialty coffees.
- ♦ Fill your plate with the lower-fat foods such as cranberry dishes, pumpkin, green beans, asparagus, veggie salads, lean turkey, pasta, or bread.
- ♦ Take low calorie dishes to holiday pitch-in events.
- ♦ Stay far away from the buffet table and indulge in conversation, not alcohol or high-calorie food.
- ♦ If you choose to drink alcohol, eat something first and drink a full glass of water before the alcohol drink.
- ♦ Exercise when you can.

