

Holiday Safety

Christmas, Chanukah and Kwanzaa are happy, joyous times during the month of December, and safety should be incorporated into these celebrations. According to the National Fire Protection Association, between 2005 and 2009, 240 home fires resulted from unsafe Christmas trees and caused an average of 13 deaths, 27 injuries, and \$16.7 million in direct property damage annually. Holiday lights, candles, and unsafe fireplaces and heaters also cause additional home structure fires, injuries, and carbon monoxide exposures each year, respectively. Injuries among young children and toddlers are a concern during the holiday season; small items in presents can be choking hazards, and unintentional ingestion of alcohol and poisonous plants can occur.

Safety Tips for the holiday season:

First and foremost, always have functional smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors properly installed and maintained in your home. Replace batteries annually.

Christmas Trees –

- For live trees, select a green one and ensure needles don't fall off when touched
- Do not put a live tree up too early; remove trees which start losing needles
- Maintain water in the base of a live tree and do not let it go dry
- Do not put a tree near drapes or heat vents, candles, and fireplaces
- Be sure artificial trees are certified by the manufacturer as fire retardant.
- Only use approved UL lighting; don't use stringed lights with frayed cords
- Do not plug too many electrical items into an outlet or power strip

Candles

- Never leave lit candles unattended, near curtains or other flammable objects, or on a tree
- Keep candles out of the reach of young children and pets
- Be sure the candle holder is placed on a safe, heat-resistant surface
- Be sure the candle is in a well-ventilated room

Toys

- Check the website of the US Product Safety Commission for toy recalls (<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/prereel/category/toy.html>)
- Ensure toys are age-appropriate, and non-toxic, with no sharp edges or magnets
- Do toys have loose parts that can be ingested?
- Do toys have long strings or ribbons that may pose a strangulation risk?
- Toys that shoot small projectiles may pose a risk of eye damage for children.
- Loud toys, particularly with headphones or ear buds, may pose a hearing risk
- Monitor toddlers playing with toys

Unintentional Poisoning

- Young children may unknowingly ingest alcohol if the opportunity presents itself.
- Use proper ventilation & carbon monoxide detectors with fireplaces and heaters
- Keep poisonous plants and berries out of reach of small children and pets
- Salts used to create colors in fireplaces are harmful if ingested
- Keep the poison control number handy

Please make this the SAFEST, most joyous holiday season by taking these precautions. Remember – INJURIES ARE NO ACCIDENT. For more information, contact the Kentucky Injury Prevention Center, or visit our website at: www.kiprc.uky.edu

