

Holiday Safety Tips

Decorating Safety

- Never use lighted candles near trees, boughs, curtains/drapes, or with any potentially flammable item.
- 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.
- 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.
- Turn off all lights on trees and decorations when you go to bed or leave the house. Unplug extension cords when not in use.
- Follow all manufacturers directions when stringing lights together. Usually no more than 3 strands of lights can be used on a single extension cord.

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.