

# Happy Holidays - *Safe Holidays*



consumerbrief

Every year during the holiday season we hear of tragedies that could have been prevented with a little common sense. Below are some safety rules to help you have a truly happy holiday.

## **GENERAL SAFETY RULES**

- Keep matches, lighters and candles out of the reach of children.
- Avoid smoking near flammable decorations.
- Do not wear loose, flowing clothes near open flames of a fireplace, stove or candle.
- Never burn candles near evergreens.
- Do not burn evergreens in the fireplace. When dry, evergreens ignite and burn like timber. Flames can flare out of control and send sparks flying into the room or up the chimney where creosote deposits may accidentally be ignited.
- Make a plan in case a fire breaks out. Include in the plan how to leave the house and designate a place outside where all family members will meet.
- Most importantly, make sure you extinguish any open flame before you go to bed.

## **ARTIFICIAL TREES**

Many artificial trees are fire resistant. Look for statements confirming this fact. Fire resistant, however, does not mean fireproof. Turn out decorative lights on the tree before you go to bed at night.

## **REAL TREES**

A fresh tree will stay green longer and will be less of a fire hazard than a dry tree. To check freshness, remember:

- the tree should be green;
- fresh needles should be hard to pull off branches and should not break when bent;
- the bottom should be sticky with resin;
- when the tree is bounced on the ground, a shower of falling needles means that the tree is too dry.

To keep your tree fresh, cut about two inches off the trunk to expose fresh wood for better water absorption. Place your tree in a stand and keep the stand filled with water. Place trees out of the way of traffic patterns. Use wires to secure the tree to the walls or ceiling, if necessary.

Keep trees away from fireplaces, radiators, stoves and other heat sources. Wood is very combustible.

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## SNOW

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Artificial snow sprays can irritate the lungs if inhaled. Read container labels and follow directions carefully.

## LIGHTS

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- Indoors or outdoors, use only lights that have been tested for safety. Tested lights will carry a label from an independent testing laboratory.
- Check lights for broken or cracked sockets, frayed wires or loose connections. Discard damaged sets.
- Fasten outdoor lights securely to prevent wind damage. Use no more than three standard size sets of lights per single extension cord.
- Keep “bubbling” lights away from children. They can tempt children to break candle-shaped glass which can cut. Children may also attempt to drink the liquid which contains a hazardous chemical.

**TURN OFF LIGHTS WHEN YOU GO TO BED OR LEAVE THE HOUSE. LIGHTS CAN SHORT CIRCUIT AND START A FIRE.**

## CANDLES

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- Never use lighted candles near trees or evergreens.
- Use nonflammable candle holders.
- Keep candles away from decorations and wrapping paper.
- Place candles where they cannot be knocked down or blown over.

## TRIMMINGS

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- Use only noncombustible or flame-resistant materials.
- Wear gloves when decorating with spun glass “angel hair” to avoid irritation to skin.
- Choose tinsel or artificial icicles of plastic or nonleaded metals. Leaded materials are hazardous if ingested by children.

## IN A HOME WITH SMALL CHILDREN:

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- Avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable;
- keep trimmings with removable parts out of the reach of children;
- avoid trimmings that resemble food or candy; a child could eat them.

## FIREPLACE

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- Before lighting any fire, remove all greens, bows, papers and other decorations from the fireplace area. Make sure the flue is open.
- Always keep a screen in front of the fireplace when the fire is burning.
- Use care with “fire salts” which produce colored flames when thrown on wood fires. They contain heavy metals which can cause intense gastrointestinal irritation or vomiting if eaten. Keep them away from children.

## PAPER

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- When making paper decorations, look for materials labeled noncombustible or flame-resistant.
- Never place trimmings near an open flame or electrical connections.
- Remove all wrapping papers from flue and fireplace areas immediately after presents are opened.
- Do not burn papers in the fireplace. A flash fire may result as wrappings ignite suddenly and burn intensely.

## REMEMBER

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There is no substitute for common sense. Look for and eliminate potential danger spots near candles, fireplaces and trees. Check electrical fixtures and connections.

If you have any questions call the Division at 800-242-5846, 973-504-6200, or via email at: [AskConsumerAffair@lps.nj.state.us](mailto:AskConsumerAffair@lps.nj.state.us)



Have a happy and safe *Holiday Season.*

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