



NEWS RELEASE

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HOLIDAY SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

MOSES LAKE, Wash. (01 DECEMBER 2009) — With Christmas now only a few weeks away, Grant County Emergency Management is offering the following safety tips to help keep families safe this holiday season.

TREES AND DECORATIONS

- If you are purchasing an artificial tree, make certain the tree is labeled “Fire Resistant”. Although this label does not ensure the tree won’t catch fire, it does indicate the tree is more resistant to burning.
- When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness. Fresh trees should be green and have needles that are hard to pull from branches and do not break when bent. The bottom of a fresh tree is sticky with resin and when tapped on the ground, should not lose many needles.
- Make certain a tree is placed away from fireplaces, vent and radiators. Because heated rooms rapidly dry out live trees, check daily to make sure the stand is filled with water. Place the tree out of the way of traffic, and do not block doorways.
- When trimming a tree, use only non-combustible or flame-resistant materials.
- In homes with small children, make certain to avoid sharp or breakable decorations, keep trimmings with small removable parts out of reach of children who could inhale or swallow small pieces, and avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food that may tempt a child or pet to eat them.
- Holiday plants can be quite attractive to children and pets, but they are potentially very toxic. Make sure that plants such as poinsettia, mistletoe, holly, rhododendron and potpourri are kept out of the reach of children and pets at all times.
- If you decorate with artificial snow sprays, follow container instructions carefully to avoid lung irritation.
- Do not allow children to chew gift wrapping as it often contains toxic metals.

LIGHTS

- Indoors or outside, only use lights that have been tested for safety by a nationally-recognized testing laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL). Use only newer lights that have thicker wiring and safety fuses to prevent the wires from overheating.
- Check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections and throw out any damaged sets.
- Avoid overloading sockets with many plugs as this can start an electrical fire.
- If using extension cords, never run them under the carpet, and make sure they are rated for their intended use.
- Do not use electric lights on a metal tree. The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights, and a person touching a branch could be electrocuted.
- For outside decorations, use only lights specifically labeled for outdoor use.
- Turn off all holiday lights when you go to bed or leave the house. The lights could short out and start a fire.

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CANDLES

- Keep burning candles within sight.
- Be sure lighted candles are kept away from combustible items such as trees, decorations, drapes and furniture.
- Never leave children unattended in a room with lit candles, and always keep candles out of reach of children and pets.
- Do not use candles to decorate Christmas trees.
- Avoid using candles during parties.
- Do not display lighted candles in windows or near exits.
- Extinguish all candles before you go to bed, leave the room, or leave the house.

FIREPLACES

- If you plan to hang stockings on your fireplace, do not use the fireplace for fires.
- Make sure to use a screen around your fireplace to prevent sparks from igniting nearby flammable materials.
- Have your chimney inspected by a professional prior to the start of every heating season and cleaned if necessary. Creosote, which forms when wood burns, can cause a chimney fire if not properly cleaned.
- Be careful with “fire salts” which produce colored flames when thrown on wood fires. They contain heavy metals that, if eaten, can cause intense gastrointestinal irritation and vomiting. Keep them away from children.
- Do not burn wrapping paper or plastic items in the fireplace. These materials can ignite suddenly and burn intensely, resulting in a flash fire. In addition, these items may give off toxic fumes.

OTHER TIPS

- When visiting other people’s homes, remember that their houses may not be child proofed. Look around to make sure there are no obvious hazards to your child.
- To help avoid food poisoning, always thaw your turkey in the refrigerator and not on the countertop.
- If guests will be smoking at your holiday party, provide them with large, deep ashtrays and check them frequently. After the party, check under upholstery and furniture and in trash cans for cigarette butts that may be smoldering
- When attending a party, always designate a non-drinking driver. If you are the host of a holiday gathering, be sure there are plenty of non-alcoholic beverages available for guests who are driving.
- Place space heaters at least three feet away from anything combustible, such as bedding, clothing, wallpaper, pets and people. Never leave space heaters operating when you are not in the room or when you go to bed, and don’t leave children or pets unattended with space heaters. Do not dry mittens or other clothing over space heaters as this is a fire hazard.

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