

December 2008

# SAFETY NEWSLETTER



## TOPIC: HOLIDAY SAFETY

The holidays are a special and wonderful time of the year. Holiday lights and decorations certainly add beauty to the holiday season, but decorations should be displayed with the utmost care. Please read the following holiday safety reminders, and take extra care this season to be sure that it is a safe one, on campus and at home.

### HOLIDAY DECORATING AND LIGHTING

- At home, use caution with holiday decorations, and whenever possible, choose those made with flame-resistant, flame-retardant or non-combustible materials. **However, all decorations on campus must be fire/flame retardant or non-combustible.**
- Purchase and use only lights and electrical decorations bearing the name of an independent testing lab (e.g., Underwriters Laboratory), and follow the manufacturer's instructions for installation and maintenance.
- **Please note that lighted candles, incense and potpourri are prohibited in all University buildings.**
- At home, keep candles away from items that can catch fire. (i.e., clothing, books, paper, curtains, Christmas trees, decorations)
  - Use candle holders that are sturdy, won't tip over easily, are made from a material that cannot burn and are large enough to collect dripping wax.
  - Do not place lit candles near windows, exits, or on Christmas trees.
  - Extinguish all candles when leaving the room or going to sleep.
  - Place candle holders on a sturdy, uncluttered surface and do not use candles in places where they could be knocked over.
- **On campus, decorations should not hang from or obstruct** fire detectors, fire alarm pull stations, exit signs, emergency lights, fire extinguishers, fire signals, sprinklers, or **any emergency equipment.**
- **On campus, lights may not be used in combination with combustible materials.** (such as dried flowers, wreaths and so forth)
- Plug all outdoor electric decorations into circuits with ground fault circuit interrupters to avoid potential shocks.

### CHRISTMAS TREES

- When decorating Christmas trees, always use safe tree lights. (Some lights are designed only for indoor or outdoor use.) Larger tree lights should also have some type of reflector rather than a bare bulb and all lights should be listed by a testing laboratory.

- **Never 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.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions on how to use tree lights. Any string of lights with worn, frayed, or broken cords or loose bulb connections should not be used.
- **Live trees are not permitted in University buildings. When purchasing an artificial tree, be sure it is labeled as fire-resistant or fire-retardant.**
- Always unplug decorative lights and Christmas tree lights before leaving home, work, or going to sleep. The lights could short out and start a fire.
- At home, try to keep live trees as moist as possible by giving them plenty of water daily. Do not purchase a tree that is dry or with dropping needles.
- Choose a sturdy tree stand designed not to tip over.
- **Make sure the tree is at least three feet (one meter) away from any heat source** and position it near an outlet so that cords are not running long distances. **Do not place the tree or other decorations where it will block exits or passageways.**
- At home, safely dispose of the tree when it begins dropping needles. Dried-out trees are highly flammable and should not be left in a house or garage, or placed against the house.

#### HOLIDAY ENTERTAINING

- Unattended cooking is the leading cause of home fires in the United States. Always keep an eye on the range.
- Clean cooking equipment so that food items like grease do not start fires.
- Make sure potholders, rags, and other combustibles are kept away from cooking surfaces.
- Avoid wearing loose-fitting clothing that might catch on fire easily.
- Keep pot handles turned in to avoid spills and possible scalds, and keep children and pets away from cooking areas.
- Keep a pan lid nearby to slide over flames in the event of a pan grease or oil fire. Remember to turn the heat off.

#### STRESS

The holiday season is one of the most stressful times of the year. You cannot avoid stress completely, but you can give yourself some relief.

- Allow enough time to shop rather than hurrying through stores and parking lots.
- Only plan to do a reasonable number of errands.
- When shopping, make several trips out to the car to drop off packages rather than trying to carry too many items.
- Take time out for yourself. Relax, read, or enjoy your favorite hobby at your own pace.

**The EHRS Department would like to wish you a safe and happy holiday season!**