

Hither & Thither

104th Area Support Group Safety Office, Volume 14, November 2003

Holiday Safety

The holidays are a hectic time of year for everyone - running errands, doing last minute shopping, preparing feasts, and visiting friends and relatives. There are safety rules for work and play but there are also some very important rules to consider during this time of year.

Christmas Trees

Should we get a live tree or an artificial one? A difficult decision, but important to ask nonetheless. Here are some considerations:

If your decision is to buy a live tree ensure you purchase a fresh one. Fresh trees are moister and less flammable than dry trees. You might consider cutting the tree yourself at a local tree farm. When that is not an option, there are several ways to judge the freshness of a pre-cut tree:

- Brush your hand across the limbs to check for loose needles. The fresher the tree, the fewer the needles will drop off.
- Lift and tap the tree on the ground. The fresher the tree, the fewer the needles will drop off.
- The trunk should be sticky with sap - test by touching the trunk in several places.
- Once you get the tree home, immerse it in a bucket of water until time for decorating.
- Before setting up the tree, cut a one- or two-inch diagonal slice from the bottom of the tree.

- Mount the tree in a sturdy, water-holding stand and keep the stand filled with water.
- Do not place the tree near any electrical, flammable or heat-producing sources.
- Keep the tree in area free of frequent people and pet traffic.
- Make sure that small children are supervised when around or near the tree.

Artificial trees are generally less flammable than live trees, but there are still precautions to consider:

- Check the manufacturer-provided information on the tree's flammability rating and fire resisting capabilities.
- Brush your hand across the limbs to check for loose needles and materials.
- The tree should be well constructed to withstand the rigors of set up and displaying.
- Mount the tree in a sturdy stand.
- Do not place the tree near any electrical, flammable, or heat-producing sources.
- Keep the tree in area free from frequent people and pet traffic.
- Make sure that small children are supervised when around or near the tree.
- Never use electrical lighting on a metallic tree.

Lights/Lighting

Lights add a very festive flavor to holiday decorating and are a common site in many homes during the season. A little common sense and a few

precautionary steps will help prevent fires and electrical shocks.

- Don't mix and match lights or lighting sets. Keep outside lights outside, and indoor lights inside.
- Check that each strand of lights has a manufacturer's label indicating that it has been safety tested prior to leaving the factory.
- Ensure all bulbs are secure in their sockets and replace any broken or missing bulbs.
- Make sure the wiring is free of nicks, cuts, breaks, and bare wires.
- Check each set for proper operation prior to trimming the tree or decorating the home.
- Position all bulbs so that they do not directly contact the needles of the tree.
- If you string light sets together, limit them to no more than 200 miniature lights or 50 larger lamps through one strand.
- Never connect more than three sets of lights to one extension cord.
- Never connect extension cords together.
- Keep all cords and plugs away from the tree and the water under the tree.
- Place cords out of traffic areas but never run cords under rugs or carpets.
- Always unplug the lights inside and outside when no one is home and prior to going to bed.

Decorations

Decorations are a must around any home but can add to the hazards as well. Children and pets are especially prone to

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injuries caused by swallowing decorations, being cut from the glass of fragile ornaments, or poisoned by the toxic paints used on some.

Even if there are no children or pets in the home, wear gloves when handling spun glass and very fragile ornaments. Never use metal garlands or ornaments near electrical wiring and lighting as they may cause shock.

Do not use open flame candles and never place lit candles on the tree. Many candles have wicks that contain lead and prolonged burning in the home or office can affect health.

Choose and place decorations carefully, ever mindful of the dangers associated with their use.

Fireplaces

Nothing is more relaxing than a few logs burning in the fireplace on a cold winter night. Before getting too cozy however, consider these safety tips:

- Do not burn foreign materials or paper in the fireplace.
- Use kindling and wooden matches to light the fire - never a rolled up newspaper.
- Keep trees, wiring, and decorations away from the fireplace.
- Don't close the flue until the fire is completely extinguished.
- Make sure the fire is out before leaving home or retiring for the evening - never leave the fire unattended.
- Properly dispose of ashes.

Cooking

With the home decorated it is time to prepare the food. Simple kitchen rules will help ensure the feast can be enjoyed.

- Monitor all kitchen activities.
- Turn pot and pan handles inward during cooking.
- Keep hands, utensils, and preparation surfaces clean.
- Keep all foods properly heated or cooled as appropriate.
- Ensure you follow all cooking, recipe, and preparation instructions.
- After eating, place all leftovers in the refrigerator as soon as possible and dispose of unwanted food items.

Alcohol

During the holidays, more people are killed or injured in accidents involving alcohol use than at any other time of the year. Of course, everyone wants to have a good time but consumption must be tempered with common sense.

- Never drink and drive!
- Never drink on an empty stomach.
- Don't drink when pregnant.
- Always remember that you have the right to refuse a drink. Never feel obligated or pressured into drinking just because "everyone" else is.

Other Sage Advice

- Keep a complete first aid kit handy. Know what each kit contains and replace used or missing items.

- When traveling remember to pre-plan the trip. Consider the weather, road conditions, condition of your vehicle, route, and time.
- When shopping, do not flash large amounts of cash. Beware of areas prone to pick pocketing such as malls and markets.

Enjoy the season but consider why it is a time of celebration. Be thankful and kind to others always remembering that it is better to give than to receive.

Have a Happy and SAFE Holiday Season! *gwh/03*



Ten Tips for Food Safety

Women's World 2002 (Reprint)

- After shopping, store chilled and frozen food immediately in the fridge or freezer.
- Prepare and store raw and cooked food separately in the fridge, keeping raw meat and fish at the bottom.
- Keep all food in the fridge covered, either in wrapping, in jars or covered with cling film.
- Check 'use-by' dates and use food within the recommended period.
- Keep your kitchen clean. Clean all worktops, chopping

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boards and other utensils between handling food to be cooked and food which is not.

- Change tea towels and dish cloths often; keep dish cloths away from the food area.
- Always wash your hands thoroughly before preparing food, after going to the toilet or after handling pets.
- Cook meat thoroughly until the juices run clear. Follow the instructions on the pack. When re-heating food, make sure it is piping hot.
- Never eat chicken that is not properly cooked and par-cook chicken that is going to be barbecued.
- Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold — don't just leave them standing around.
- Do not eat food containing uncooked eggs. Keep eggs in the fridge.
- Keep pets away from the food preparation area, dishes and worktops.



Stress Self-Care Tips

We all face different pressures each day and we try many things to relieve the strain. With the current world situation and the upcoming holiday season, these stresses can intensify. It is imperative to:

- Take care of yourself by getting good and adequate

exercise, regular sleep and rest, and eating balanced meals.

- Develop friendships or relationships with persons you are able to confide in about important aspects of the job and perhaps your personal life.
- Take time off to “smell the roses.” Take vacations or long weekends away from your normal environment and relax.
- Manage your time by setting realistic goals and deadlines. Plan projects accordingly and complete “must do” items first. Schedule difficult tasks for the time of day you are normally most productive and tackle easy tasks during that period where you are less motivated or lack energy.
- Set limits and learn to politely say “no” when it is necessary.
- Choose battles wisely and avoid rushing to argue every time someone does not see it your way. Always keep a cool head and save the argument for things that really matter.
- Use calming skills to protect from giving in to the first impulse. Always give anger time to subside - count to ten if necessary.
- Don't use drugs or alcohol as they can and do impair your judgment and reasoning capacity.
- Look for less stressful options in the job arena if yours' tends to stay stressful.
- Seek help when all else fails. Never be afraid to admit that you may need professional advice on learning to deal with stress.

Stress is a fact of life and varies significantly from individual to

individual. The key to successfully managing stress is to learn to replace bad or negative stress with good or positive stress. Learning what good stress is for you personally will be a huge step toward learning to deal with the bad stress. *gwh/03*



Commander
104th Area Support Group
AETV-HUG-S
Unit 20193
CMR 470, Box 0001
APO AE 09165-0001
314-322-1470
49-6181-881470

www.104thasg.hanau.army.mil

gary.helmer@104asg.army.mil

A Parting Thought

“My life shall touch a dozen lives before this day is done, leave countless marks for good or ill ere sets the evening sun, this is the wish I always wish, the prayer I always pray; Lord, may my life help other lives it touches by the way.” - *Anonymous*

Happy Holidays!