

Safety Fact Sheet



The Utah Safety Council cares about your safety outside of the work setting. We offer resources that keep you and your loved ones safe at home, at play and on the go.

HOLIDAY HAZARDS

The holidays are upon us! Shopping, parties, dazzling lights, good food, the smell of fresh pine. As you enjoy the holiday season, consider these common sense tips to help make your holidays safe and healthy for you and your family.

Food Safety:

The holidays often mean preparing large meals for family and friends. Be sure to practice proper food handling to avoid food borne illness. Food borne illness often shows up as stomach flu-like symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or fever. Age and physical condition place some persons at higher risk than others for any type of bacteria. Symptoms usually occur between one hour and three weeks after eating contaminated food.

- Keep in mind that a stuffed bird takes longer to cook. For questions concerning holiday turkey preparation and cooking call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 800.535.4555.
- Refrigerate or freeze leftovers in covered shallow containers (less than two inches deep) within two hours after cooking.
- Date the leftovers for future use.

There are four basic food safety steps to help reduce the risk of food borne illness:

1. CLEAN - wash hands and surfaces often
2. SEPARATE - don't cross contaminate
3. COOK - cook to proper temperatures
4. CHILL - refrigerate promptly

For more on food safety, check the following website: FOODSAFETY.GOV

Toxic Decorations:

- Mistletoe and holly berries may be poisonous if swallowed.
- Lamp oils are colorful and attractive to children. If swallowed, these oils can be easily aspirated.
- Tinsel/icicles are non-toxic, but may cause airway or bowel obstruction. Old tinsel may contain lead.
- Glass ornaments are easily broken and may cause lacerations if swallowed.
- Poinsettia may cause discomfort when swallowed. Some symptoms include varying degrees of irritation to the mouth and stomach. Some people may also experience mild rashes if they come in contact with the sap.
- Bubble lights are filled with alcohol or other solvent. Beware of broken glass if a child bites into a bulb. Eye and skin irritation may result from contact with the chemical. Some contain methylene chloride which may be harmful if swallowed.
- Wear gloves while decorating with spun glass "angel hair." It can irritate your eyes and skin. A common substitute is non-flammable cotton.
- Both angel hair and cotton snow are flame retardant when used alone. However, if artificial snow is sprayed onto them, the dried combination will burn rapidly.
- 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.

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Medications:

- There is no such thing as a childproof lid. Medicine bottle lids are only child-resistant. Keep all medicines locked up.
- Be aware when you are hosting visitors, or visiting other homes, of potential hazards to small children including medications that may not be in child resistant containers.
- Read labels carefully. Many cough and cold medications have similar ingredients and also include analgesics such as ibuprofen and acetaminophen. Using more than one product may result in unintended double dosing due to the same or similar ingredients in different products.

Fires:

- Use the right lights for the right environment. Indoor light sets lack weatherproof connections. Many outdoor light sets burn too hot for indoor use.
- Inspect light sets before use. Check for cracked bulbs, broken or exposed wires and discard if faulty.
- Never leave a lit holiday display unattended.
- Never burn gift-wrappings, boxes, cartons, or other types of packing materials in fireplaces.
- Move Christmas stockings from the mantel when the fireplace is in use.
- Use properly sized fireplace screens to protect against flying sparks.
- Burn only seasoned and dried wood.
- Have the chimney cleaned annually or more often if used as a primary heat source.
- Remove ashes when cool and place in a metal container with a tight-fitting lid. Place the container outside, away from wooden decks or porches.
- Read product instructions regarding the maximum number of cords that can be plugged into a single outlet.
- Place candles in non-tip holders on a sturdy, stable surface away from curtains, holiday trees, or other decorations that may catch fire easily. Don't leave candles burning unattended, and keep them out of the reach of small children.
- If you decorate a tree, choose a fresh-cut Christmas tree that's not shedding its needles. Cut the tree trunk at an angle and install the tree in a large, deep non-tip stand, well away from fireplaces, heaters and doors. Be sure to water the tree frequently and remove it promptly if it becomes dry. If your tree is artificial, make sure it's flame retardant.

Electrical Outlets:

- Avoid overloading wall outlets, even for short periods.
- Inspect all electrical cords before using and discard those with damage or frayed wires.
- Use only listed cords.
- Insert plugs fully into outlets. Poor contact can overheat the plug and wire.
- Do not coil or bunch an extension cord that is in use.
- Avoid placing cords beneath carpets or rugs.

Portable Heaters

- Make sure they have been approved by a testing lab.
- Read and follow the manufacturer's operating instruction and keep the owner's manual available for reference.
- Avoid purchasing used portable heating equipment.

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- When using un-vented, fuel-fired heaters, never use gasoline and keep an adequate supply of fresh air. Consider installing carbon monoxide alarms.
- Keep all portable heaters at least 3 feet away from furniture and curtains. Never leave heaters operating unattended.
- Never use an extension cord to operate a space heater.

Toys and Gifts

- Be especially careful when you choose toys for infants or small children. Be sure anything you give them is too big to get caught in the throat, nose or ears.
- Look for age guidelines on the toy or its package. If you're buying for several children in one family, remember that younger children may want to play with older kids' toys.
- Avoid toys with small parts that can be pulled or broken off. If you are giving toys to several children in one family, consider their age differences and the chances that younger children will want to play with older kids' toys. Pay special attention to toys with button batteries.
- Select gifts for older adults that are not heavy or awkward to handle. For persons with arthritis, make sure the gift does not require assembly and can be easily opened and closed. Choose books with large type for anyone with vision impairment.

Alcohol, Parties and Driving

- 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.
- Offer a variety of beverages, including non-alcoholic ones, at holiday parties.

Stress

- 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. Start to shop early in the season, rather than hurry through stores and parking lots during the holiday rush.
- 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.
- Make it easy on yourself; gift certificates often make the most appreciated gifts.
- Remember that you don't have to accept every holiday party invitation.
- Take time out for yourself. Relax, read, or enjoy your favorite hobby at your own pace.

As you enter the holiday hustle and bustle, remember to put safety at the top of your list. Think Safe. Think Family.