

AfterWords

A NEWSLETTER FROM **AFTERDISASTER**
THE WATER AND FIRE EMERGENCY TEAM

December

BE SAFE THIS HOLIDAY

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It's hard to believe that the Christmas season is here: decorating, shopping for gifts, visiting with friends and family, wide eyes of children, aroma of Christmas trees, and holiday cooking. We all look forward to joyful events during the season. Too many times, however, the happiness is abruptly interrupted by disasters that can happen during the season if some simple safety rules are ignored.

Let's start our safety check with the Christmas tree. If using a live tree, be sure to keep it watered to avoid premature drying which can turn a beautiful tree into kindling. Check the electric lights for frayed or exposed wiring which could short circuit and start a fire. Are all lights rated for use on trees? Could the lights overheat and ignite the tree or decorations? Are too many lights being plugged into one extension cord? Extension cords should never cross walking areas and become tripping hazards. Never allow pets to play with or chew on the lights or cords. Be sure to keep all cords away from the water reservoir of the tree stand to prevent shock hazards.

Presents under the tree should be clear of contact with the lights and away from heat vents to avoid heat damage to the wrapping or gifts inside.

Other electric decorating lights used inside the house should be checked for frayed or exposed wiring or damaged bulbs. Be careful of overheating the surfaces they contact. Too many times, electric candles in windows overheat and ignite drapes or curtains they touch. Lights and extension cords for outside decorating must be designed for outside use and never where rainwater or ice could cause shorting or shock hazards. Again, eliminate extension cords in walkways.

Many decorations now dance, sing or rock, utilizing motors. These motors must be checked for safe, unobstructed operation. Blocked movement could cause overheating and a potential fire hazard. If used outside, be sure the decoration is designed for outdoor use or again, shorting and fire can occur.

The holiday season often sees an increase in use of the fireplace. Have the fireplace, chimney, damper, and flue checked for safe operation. Be sure the damper is correctly set to avoid fumes, unnecessary draft or soot puffbacks. Do not place decora-

tions, presents, or plants too close to the fireplace where heat or sparks from the hearth could damage or ignite them. Keep screens in place and be sure children are told not to play with the fire.

We all enjoy burning holiday candles for their beautiful appearance and scent. Remember, however, that these present potential safety hazards of open flame, combustible heat, dripping hot wax, and soot. Be careful about placement of these candles, keeping them away from any decorations, presents, plants, or other materials the candles could ignite or damage. Also remember those scented candles or potpourri may be irritating to some guests, so monitor the effects.

Inside or outside, it is a very good practice not to leave any electrical decorations on or open flame burning while you are away or after you retire for the night. Also be sure all your fire/smoke alarms are operating properly.

Finally, the increase in cooking during the holiday season increases the incidence of kitchen fires, so be careful to use all cooking devices and venting equipment safely and don't let the increased activity distract you to forget that pot on the stove.

AFTERDISASTER® wishes you a very safe and happy holiday season!

For assistance, please call your local **AFTERDISASTER**® Business Center
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