



TDCJ Risk Management's  
*Training Circular*

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# "HOLIDAY SEASON SAFETY"

The anticipation of family gatherings fills this time of year with smiles, laughter and fun. Ensuring the safety of our loved ones must be our top priority!

Careful planning and wise decisions can make the difference in ensuring the holiday our families experience will be joyous and safe.

Plan ahead and make the right choices. Make safety planning a family affair and tradition. Don't let your creativity overwhelm your holiday decorating.

Safe shopping can prevent serious injuries or tragedy. Remember to lock packages in the trunk. If a suspicious person is spotted, notify law enforcement immediately. Be aware of your surroundings at all times. Have your keys in your hands before arriving to your vehicle.

## **Decorations**

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.

## **Fireplaces**

You should not try to burn evergreens or wreaths in the fireplace or in a wood stove to dispose of them. They are likely to flare out of control and send flames and smoke into the room. Also, do not burn wrapping paper in the fireplace because it often contains metallic materials that can be toxic if burned.

## **Candles**

Before using candles in the workplace, ensure they are per-

mitted. The use of candles in government buildings is discouraged due to the serious fire hazards as well as possible irritants associated with them.

Some people may be highly allergic to chemicals used in fragrant candles. The use of candles in lease buildings might even negate insurance coverage of that facility. Always check with your supervisor before using candles at work. Never use lighted candles near trees, boughs, curtains/drapes, or with any potentially flammable item.

## **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. 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.

### Older adults

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.

### Plants

Small children may think that holiday plants look good enough to eat. But many plants can cause severe stomach problems. Plants to watch out for include: mistletoe, holly berries, Jerusalem cherry, and amaryllis. Keep all of these plants out of children's reach..

### Food and Cooking

The holidays often mean preparing large meals for family and friends. Wash hands, utensils, sink, and anything else that has come in contact with raw poultry. 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 1-800-535-4555. Refrigerate or freeze leftovers in covered shallow containers (less than two inches deep) within two hours after cooking. Date the leftovers for future use.

### 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.

### 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. Allow enough time to shop rather than hurry 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.

### Home Fire Prevention and Preparedness

Fires and burns continue to be a major cause of unintentional injury death at home. Particularly at risk are the very young and the very old.

### Facts

- \* 80 percent of all fire deaths occur in the home (U.S. Fire Administration)
- \* The leading cause of fire deaths is careless smoking (U.S. Fire Administration)
- \* Having a working smoke detector more than doubles one's chances of surviving a fire (U.S. Fire Administration)
- \* 3,675 people died in fires in the United States in 2005 – one person every 143 min-

utes. While the number of fires increased in 2005 over 2004, the number of deaths decreased 5.8 percent. (National Fire Protection Association).

- \* In 2005, 106 firefighters died in the line of duty in the United States – down from 117 in 2004 (U.S. Fire Administration)
- \* Adults 65 and older are more than twice as likely to die in fires as the overall population. (U.S. Fire Administration study)
- \* People born in 2003 have a 1-in-1,100 lifetime odds of dying due to exposure to smoke, fire or flame. Odds in any given year are 1:86,000. (National Safety Council)

### Follow the safety tips listed below to protect yourself and your family.

#### Smoke Detectors

- \* One is definitely NOT enough! Every home should be equipped with smoke detectors on every level, particularly outside of sleeping areas.
- \* Ensure that your smoke detectors are tested monthly and batteries are replaced twice a year. Change batteries when you change your clocks.
- \* Encourage children to help test the smoke detectors. Familiarize them with the sounds of the alarm(s).

### Fire Extinguishers

- \* It's a good idea to keep fire extinguishers near the furnace, garage, and anywhere else a fire may start. These extinguishers are affordable, life-saving equipment for your home.
- \* Make sure every able-bodied member of the family is trained and familiar with the proper way to use the fire extinguishers.
- \* If you must use an extinguisher, make sure you have a clear way out in the event you can't put out the fire.
- \* Around the holidays, Christmas trees are a primary concern. Consider using an artificial tree that is labeled "flame resistant." If you do use an evergreen, water it daily to keep it from drying out. Make sure to inspect stringed lights and window ornaments annually for deterioration.
- \* Dispose of materials from fireplaces and grills in non-flammable containers.
- \* Never put children to sleep in "day" clothes. Fire-retardant sleepwear can make a difference in burn outcomes.
- fire places, and other heat sources as intended by the manufacturer. Before using space heaters at work, ensure they are permitted.
- \* National Fire Protection Administration (NFPA) prohibits the use of portable space heaters in offender occupancies. No space heater may be used in areas where offenders would have contact with them. Before using a space heater in an administrative area, ensure the heater is safe to use. Look for labeling that indicates the heater has been tested and listed for use. This marking is typically in the form of a symbol such as the Underwriters Laboratory and looks similar to this.

### Flammables

- \* Keep matches, lighters and candles out of reach and out of sight of children!
- \* Smoking is dangerous! No one should ever smoke in bed. Make sure that cigarettes/cigars are extinguished properly before dumping ashes.
- \* Avoid grease build-up in the kitchen and on appliances. Cooking fires are common. Don't leave food cooking on stovetops unattended.
- \* If a fire should occur, smother it with a pot/pan lid or a cookie sheet, or close the oven door.

### Electrical Safety and Heat Sources

- \* Make sure your electrical system is not being overtaxed. This can cause a fire. Do your lights dim or flicker when extra appliances are plugged in? If you have questions or concerns, consult a certified electrician.
- \* Inspect wires. If you find any worn or exposed wiring from appliances, discontinue their use immediately! A fire is imminent!
- \* Space heaters can be dangerous if not used correctly. Make sure yours will automatically shut off if tipped over. Consult the operating instructions to make sure you are using space heaters, gas



*There are several types of acceptable markings. Don't hesitate to contact Risk Management for assistance if you're unsure if the space heater you have is safe for use.*

### Escaping a Fire

- \* Keep bedroom doors shut while sleeping. If you think there is a fire, feel the door and knob for heat before opening.
- \* Have an escape route for each area of the home and a designated meeting place outside.

- \* Draw a map—one that's easy for all members of the family and visitors to understand.
- \* Call emergency responders (911) from a neighbor's house.
- \* When planning for a family with young children, be sure to teach them not to hide from fire or smoke and to go to firefighters who are there to help them.
- \* Make sure to practice your escape plan periodically. It will be easier to remember in case of an emergency.
- \* All children should be familiar with the ideas of "crawling underneath the smoke" to escape a fire. "Stop, drop and roll" is another safety principle that must be ingrained into children's minds.
- \* Young children should know their street address and last name (and, of course, how to dial 911).
- \* Multi-storied buildings are of special concern. Ensure that everyone is familiar with how to use an escape ladder if necessary.
- \* After you've planned for the family, don't forget the pets. Alert firefighters about your pets. Don't rely on window or door decals to alert firefighters—such decals are often found to be outdated. In the event your pet suffers from smoke inhalation, rush the animal to the vet.
- \* Make sure every sleeping room has two means of escape in the event of a fire. Windows provide a secondary means of escape. Ensure they are in proper working order, are not painted shut, and guards are able to be disengaged in case of fire and escape is necessary through that window.
- \* Everyone must understand that once you escape, you must never reenter a burning building—no matter what you might have left behind.

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