



Training Circular

Holiday Safety & Stress

With the holiday season underway, people are feeling festive. Whether you are decorating your cubicle or taking part in the office potluck, safety should always remain a top priority. Plan on making this holiday season joyous and safe for everyone.

Careful planning and good decisions this holiday will be a joy for your family and friends. The holidays are a time for celebration, lots of cooking, and home and office decorating, which increases our risk of fires and accidents. Following a few guidelines will help keep your holidays safe.

Holiday Decorating

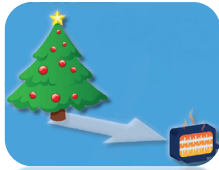
Following these simple holiday decorating tips will ensure a happy and safe holiday season:

- * Choose decorations that are flame resistant or flame retardant.
- * Keep burning candles away from decorations or flammable objects.
- * Some lights specify indoor or outdoor use only. Use as directed.
- * Replace any strands of lights containing worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections. Read the manufacturer's instructions for the maximum number of light strands that may be connected together.
- * Use clips, not nails, to prevent damaging cords when hanging lights.



As you deck the halls this season, remember:

- * The top 3 days for home candle fires are Christmas Day, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day. Keep candles at least 12 inches away from anything flammable.
- * Although Christmas tree fires are not common, when they do occur, they are dangerous. On average, 1 of every 32 reported home Christmas tree fires resulted in death.
- * A heat source too close to the Christmas tree causes 1 in every 4 related fires. Make sure your tree is at least three feet away from heat sources such as, fireplaces, radiators, space heaters, candles or heat vents. Also, make sure your tree does not block an exit.
- * Dispose of your tree when it is dry or after Christmas.



Candles or any other open flame devices are prohibited from being used in all TDCJ areas!!

FACTS

More than a 1/3 of home decoration fires are started by candles.

Almost 1/2 of decoration fires happen because decorations are placed too close to a heat source.

Holiday Entertaining

- * Test your smoke alarms and inform guests of your home fire escape plan.
- * Keep children and pets away from burning candles.
- * Store matches and lighters up high in a locked cabinet.
- * Do not leave the stove unattended.

***Blow out burning candles and
Turn off all holiday lights
and decorations when
unattended.***

When stress is at its peak, it's hard to stop and regroup. Try to prevent stress and depression before it starts, especially if the holidays have taken an emotional toll on you in the past.

1. **Acknowledge your feelings.** If someone close to you has recently died or you can not be with loved ones, realize that it is normal to feel sadness and grief. It is okay to take time to cry or express your feelings. You cannot force yourself to be happy just because it is the holiday season.
2. **Reach out.** If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community, religious or other social events that can offer you support and companionship. Volunteering your time to help others is also a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships.
3. **Be realistic.** The holidays do not have to be perfect or just like previous years. As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Choose a few to hold on to, and be open to creating new ones. For example, if your adult children cannot visit during the holidays, find new ways to celebrate together, such as sharing pictures, emails or videos.
4. **Set aside differences.** Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they do not live up to all of your expectations. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time for discussion, and be understanding if others get upset or distressed when something goes awry. Chances are they are feeling the effects of holiday stress and depression, too.
5. **Stick to a budget.** Before you go gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend, then stick to your budget. Do not try to buy their happiness with an avalanche of gifts.
6. **Plan ahead.** Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends and other activities. Plan your menus and then create your shopping list. This will help prevent last-minute scrambling to buy forgotten ingredients. Also, make sure to line up help for party prep and cleanup.
7. **Learn to say no.** Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed. Friends and colleagues will understand if you cannot participate in every project or activity.
8. **Do not abandon healthy habits.** Do not let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt.
9. **Take a breather.** Make some time for yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Reduce stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing and restoring your inner calm.
10. **Seek professional help if you need it.** Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, plagued by physical complaints, unable to sleep, irritable and hopeless, and unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for a while, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional.

Stress, Depression & the Holidays: Tips for Coping

Stress and depression can ruin your holidays and hurt your health. Being realistic, planning ahead and seeking support can help ward off stress and depression.

The holiday season often brings unwelcomed guests, stress and depression. The holidays present a dizzying array of demands like parties, shopping, baking, cleaning and entertaining. Practicing some practical tips, you can minimize the stress that accompanies the holidays.

Take Control of the Holidays

Do not let the holidays become something you dread. Instead, take steps to prevent the stress and depression that can descend during the holidays. Learn to recognize your holiday triggers, such as financial pressures or personal demands, so you can combat them before they lead to a mental breakdown. With a little planning and some positive thinking, you can find peace and joy during the holidays.

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The Training Circular, a publication of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Risk Management Department, is published monthly in an effort to promote and enhance risk management awareness on issues relating to TDCJ employees. Comments, suggestions and safety related items are welcome.

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