

Safety Matters

State of Delaware Issue CLXXII December 2020
Produced by the Insurance Coverage Office

12 Holiday Safety Tips

To help make sure your holidays don't go from merry to scary, remember these Twelve Holiday Safety Tips.

1. Keep decorations at least three feet away from heat sources – especially those with an open flame, like fireplaces and candles. And remember to blow out your candles when you leave the room or go to sleep.
2. The best decorations are safe decorations, so when you are decorating, make sure not to run cords under rugs or furniture, out of windows, or across walkways and sidewalks.
3. If you have a natural tree, water it to keep it fresh and safe. Real trees can dry up and turn into kindling in no time at all. Get rid of the tree after the holiday. Dried out trees are a fire hazard and should not be left in the home or garage.
4. Always turn off your decorations when you leave your home and when you're sleeping. Most deadly fires happen while people are asleep.
5. Be mindful of how you are using electrical outlets. If you're using extension cords or adapters that add receptacles, consider having a qualified electrician add more outlets to your home. Extension cords are a common cause of home fires.
6. Only use electronics in dry areas. As tempting as it is, you just can't decorate your aquarium with icicle lights.
7. Remember that phones and tablets should stay on your nightstand. We all love falling asleep to the muffled crooning of Bing Crosby and Michael Bublé, but overheated electronics under pillows and blankets are dangerous.
8. Need a perfect gift idea? How about a smoke alarm or carbon monoxide detector? Every home needs a working smoke alarm in each bedroom, outside sleeping areas and on every level, including the basement. And remember to test your own to make sure they're working.
9. If you're using a space heater, switch it off before leaving the room. It only takes seconds for a fire to start if a space heater tips over or comes in contact with something combustible, like a blanket or curtains.
10. Inspect your decorations and discard any that are damaged or worn out.
11. Keep batteries stored safely in their packaging and out of reach of anything that might try to eat them, like small children and pets. Eating a battery can be deadly.
12. One of the best gifts to give your family is to upgrade to Arc-Fault Circuit Interrupter breakers or outlets. It is estimated that half of the electrical fires that occur every year could be prevented if these outlets were used.

SOME ADDITIONAL HOLIDAY SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

In addition to those tips listed in the center of page one, consider these 10 simple safety tips as you prepare for the holidays:

1. Check all holiday light cords to make sure they aren't frayed or broken. Don't string too many strands of lights together—no more than three per extension cord.
2. If are buying an artificial tree, look for the fire-resistant label. When putting it up, keep it away from fireplaces, radiators and other sources of heat.
3. If getting a live tree, make sure it's fresh and water it to keep it fresh. Bend the needles up and down to make sure no needles fall off.
4. If using older decorations, check their labels. Some older tinsel is lead-based. If using angel hair, wear gloves to avoid irritation. Avoid breathing in artificial snow.
5. When decorating outside, make sure decorations are for outdoor use and fasten lights securely to your home or trees. If using hooks or nails outside, make sure they are insulated to avoid an electrocution or fire hazard.
6. If using a ladder, be extra careful. Make sure to have good, stable placement and wear shoes that allow for good traction.
7. Don't use electric lights on metallic trees.
8. The irresistible aroma of roast turkey always draws a crowd into the kitchen. Keep everyone safe by making sure the stovetop and oven are free of grease and dust, which could ignite a fire. Use back burners and turn pot handles toward the back of the stovetop, to protect children. Always keep cords away from hot surfaces, and never use electrical appliances near sinks or running water. Plug countertop appliances into ground fault circuit interrupter-protected outlets and unplug small kitchen appliances when not in use.
9. Keep children, pets, decorations and all flammable items away from candles.
10. If hanging stockings on the fireplace mantel, don't light the fireplace.



"No, we don't need to call the fire department."

HOLIDAY RIDDLES

1. What did the Gingerbread Man put on his bed?
2. Who sings "Love Me Tender" and makes toys?
3. What reindeer has the cleanest antlers?
4. Who played George Bailey in "It's A Wonderful Life?"
5. Which Hollywood actor played six different roles in The Polar Express?
6. Which fairy tale were the first gingerbread houses inspired by?

Answers on Page 2

Happy Holidays!

General Holiday Safety and Crime Prevention Tips

To protect yourself, your family and your possessions during the holiday season please follow these common sense safety and crime prevention tips:

• At Home

- ⇒ Make sure all doors and windows have secondary locks (window pins, deadbolts, dowels, etc.) and use them!
- ⇒ Don't hide spare keys in mailboxes or planters, or under doormats.
- ⇒ Ensure that dark areas and entrances have outdoor lights that are turned on after dark or are activated by sensors.
- ⇒ Keep trees and shrubbery trimmed so they do not conceal doors and windows. Remember, overgrown foliage can provide a hiding place for criminals.
- ⇒ Place gifts where they can't be seen from the outside.
- ⇒ Consider safe deposit boxes for coin and stamp collections, seldom-worn jewelry, stock bonds, etc.
- ⇒ Be sure to mail cards, checks or gift certificates from the Post Office or at a blue U.S. Postal Service collection box.
- ⇒ Lock your vehicle and remove all the valuables. Yes, even in your driveway.

• Strangers at your Door

- ⇒ Use caution anytime there is a stranger at your door.
- ⇒ Be suspicious of unexpected sales calls or deliveries. Ask for identification.
- ⇒ Be aware of scams that criminals commit to take advantage of people's generosity during the holidays.
- ⇒ Investigate charities before making donations. Ask how the funds will be used.

• Leaving for the Holidays

- ⇒ Should you chose to leave for the holidays be sure to protect yourself and your loved ones by carefully following the guidelines established by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and your state and local government health officials.
- ⇒ Ask a trusted friend, neighbor or Neighborhood Watch member to watch your home.
- ⇒ Use timers for lights and radios while you're away.
- ⇒ Remember to make arrangements for mail and newspapers.

• After the Holidays

- ⇒ Don't advertise expensive toys, electronics, or other gifts received by the boxes left for garbage collections. Compress large boxes and place them in black garbage bags for pick-up.
- ⇒ Add new items to your home inventory. Take photos or video of all items of value in your home and list each item's make, model, serial number and other information.
- ⇒ Engrave new items to help identify them in the event they are stolen.

SAFETY TIPS FOR WINTER DRIVING

Here are some safe-driving tips that will help you when roads are slick with ice or snow:

- Get the feel of the road by starting out slowly and testing your steering control and braking ability. Avoid spinning your tires when you start by gently pressing your gas pedal until the car starts to roll. Start slowing down at least three times sooner than you normally would when turning or stopping.
- Equip your vehicle with chains or snow tires. Chains are by far the most effective, and they should be used where ice and snow remain on the roadway. Remember that snow tires will slide on ice or packed snow so keep your distance.
- Reduce your speed to correspond with conditions. There is no such thing as a "safe" speed range at which you may drive on snow or ice. You must be extremely cautious until you are able to determine how much traction you can expect from your tires.
- When stopping, avoid sudden movements of the steering wheel and pump the brake gently. (Check your vehicle owner's manual, if the vehicle has anti-lock brakes, you may apply steady pressure to the brake pedal.) Avoid locking of brakes on glazed ice as it will cause a loss of steering and control. Every city block and every mile of highway may be different, depending upon sun or shade and the surface of the roadway.
- Maintain a safe interval between you and the car ahead of you according to the conditions of the pavement. Many needless rear-end crashes occur on icy streets because drivers forget to leave stopping space.
- Keep your vehicle in the best possible driving condition. The lights, tires, brakes, windshield wipers, defroster, and radiator are especially important for winter driving.
- Watch for danger or slippery spots ahead. Ice may remain on bridges even though the rest of the road is clear. Snow or ice also stick much longer in shaded areas.
- Keep your windows clear. Don't start driving until the windows are defrosted and clean - even if you're only going a short distance.



SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

Correctly operating windshield wipers and defrosters are essential to safety while driving in snow and ice conditions. Properly maintained windshield wipers are a must; there are also special blades available that are better equipped to assist in the removal of snow from the windshield. Defroster effectiveness is essential in the initial clearing of snow and ice from the windshield - and in some instances the rear window when a vehicle is so equipped - and should be checked well in advance of need. In certain cases, a change of the vehicle thermostat will restore appropriate heat to the defroster system.

QUOTATION OF THE MONTH



ON THE LIGHTER SIDE



"Stay here in case I run out of ammunition."

HOLIDAY RIDDLES ANSWERS

1. A cookie sheet!
2. Santa's Little "Elvis"
3. Comet
4. Jimmy Stewart
5. Tom Hanks
6. Hansel & Gretl