

December 2021

## Keep Safety in Mind During the Holiday Season

With winter weather and holiday preparations coming into full swing, we know there is a lot on everyone's plates with travel, events, decorations, and get togethers. It's easy to be distracted and overlook safety concerns, however, to ensure a safe and happy winter and holiday season for your family and friends, refresh yourself with the following safety tips.

### Winter Vehicle Preparation

- Prepare your car for the winter by checking items, such as the brakes, spark plugs, battery, and tires. Check your owner's manual for the recommended interval for a tune-up.
- Be prepared for emergency situations on the road by having a winter "survival kit" in the vehicle including items, such as a working flashlight, extra batteries, reflective triangles, compass, first aid kit, exterior windshield cleaner, ice scraper, snow brush, wooden stick matches in a waterproof container, and non-perishable, high energy foods like unsalted canned nuts, dried fruits, and hard candy.



### Hosting & Food Safety

- When preparing a holiday meal for friends and family be sure to wash hands, utensils, sink, and anything else that has come in contact with raw meat.
- Never defrost food at room temperature. Thaw it in the refrigerator, in cold water, or in the microwave.
- While doing holiday cooking, keep your knives sharp. Most knife injuries occur due to dull blades.
- Use a clean food thermometer to check that your food has reached a safe internal temperature before serving.
- Avoid cleaning kitchen surfaces with wet dishcloths or sponges. They easily harbor bacteria and promote bacteria growth. Use clean paper towels instead.



- Refrigerate or freeze leftovers in covered shallow containers (less than two inches deep) within two hours after cooking.
- Be responsible about alcoholic beverages. Use designated drivers, people who do not drink, to take other guests home after a holiday party. More than half of all traffic fatalities are alcohol-related.

## Decorating Safety

- Never use lighted candles near trees, boughs, curtains/drapes.
- Keep holiday plants out of children's reach, as many may be poisonous or cause severe stomach problems. Plants to watch out for include: mistletoe, holly berries, Jerusalem cherry and amaryllis.
- When displaying a live tree, remove the bottom two inches of the trunk before placing it in a sturdy, water-holding stand. Keep the stand filled with water so the tree doesn't dry out quickly.
- Keep your tree away from fireplaces, radiators and other heat sources. Make sure the tree does not block foot traffic or doorways.
- Avoid placing breakable tree ornaments or ones with small, detachable parts on lower branches where small children or pets can reach them.
- If you use an artificial tree, choose one that is tested and labeled as fire resistant. Artificial trees with built-in electrical systems should have the Underwriters Laboratory (UL) label.
- Use no more than three light sets on any one extension cord. Extension cords should be placed against the wall to avoid tripping hazards, but don't run cords under rugs, around furniture legs or across doorways.
- Turn off all lights on trees and decorations when you go to bed or leave the house. Unplug extension cords when not in use.
- When displaying outdoor lights, fasten them firmly to a secure support with insulated staples or hooks to avoid wind damage. Never nail, tack or stress wiring when hanging lights. Keep plugs off of the ground away from puddles and snow.

## Ladder Safety

- When putting up holiday decorations, always use the proper step stool or ladder. Don't stand on chairs, desks or other furniture.
- If you must use a step ladder near a doorway, lock or barricade the door and post signs so no one will open it and knock you off the ladder.
- A straight or extension ladder should be positioned one foot away from the surface it rests against for every four feet of ladder height.
- As you climb, always face the ladder and grip the rungs – not the side rails. Always keep



three points of contact on the ladder whether two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand.

- When climbing, keep your hips between the side rails and do not lean too far or overreach. Reposition the ladder closer to the work instead.
- Use ladders with slip-resistant feet and wear clean, dry, and slip-resistant shoes when climbing a ladder.
- When using ladders outdoors, get down immediately if high winds, rain, snow, or other inclement weather begins. Winds can blow you off the ladder; rain or snow can make both the rungs and the ground slippery.