

Campus Safety Quarterly

San Diego State University
Division of Business and Financial Affairs
Department of Environmental Health and Safety

Volume 15
Issue 1
Holiday 2006

In this Issue:

Celebrate the Holidays Safely	1
Give a Gift of Safety	2
Winter Fire Danger	3
Carbon Monoxide Safety	3
Reduce Holiday Waste	4
Campus Safety After Dark	4

Celebrate The Holidays Safely!

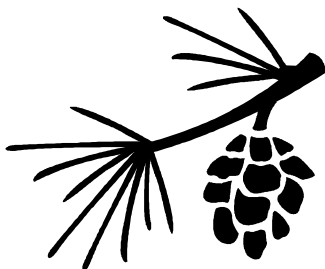
For most of us the holidays are a busy, fun time but the added stress they bring can sometimes lead to careless accidents. Nothing can ruin a holiday celebration faster than an injury or accident that could have been prevented. As you celebrate, keep safety at the top of your list!

Alcohol: Avoid excessive alcohol consumption. If you drink, don't drive. Always choose a designated driver before consuming alcohol. Do not allow friends or family to drive if they have been drinking. If you are the host or hostess, serve food and provide nonalcoholic drink options.

Candles: Candles provide a warm holiday glow but also cause thousands of home fires each year. In 2002, 18,000 home fires were caused by candles leading to 130 deaths and 1350 injuries. Always put candles in sturdy holders that won't tip over and place on a solid surface out of reach of children and pets. There should be a one-foot circle around the candle that is free of any combustible material. Never leave a lighted candle unattended, especially if you leave the house or go to sleep. Falling asleep with lit candles was a factor in 12% of home candle fires and 25% of home candle fire deaths in 2002. Christmas Day had the highest number of home candle fires followed by Christmas Eve and New Years Day.

Cooking: According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), cooking fires are the leading cause of home structure fires and home fire injuries. In 2003, cooking equipment was involved in 118,700 home fires that killed 250, injured 3880 and caused over \$500 million in direct property damage. Most were caused by unattended cooking or combustibles left too close to the heat source. Never leave the kitchen unattended while you are cooking. Avoid wearing loose clothing or sleeves that could catch fire if they come in contact with the gas flame or electric burner. Use the back burners whenever possible and turn pot handles inward to reduce the risk of spilling hot contents. Place potholders, oven mitts, food packaging and other combustibles away from the stove top. Keep an ABC type fire extinguisher in the kitchen and know how to use it. To avoid a cooking fire tragedy, the NFPA urges you to "stand by your pan" and "watch what you heat."

**EH&S
Wishes
You Safe
and
Healthy
Holidays
and a
Happy
New Year!**



Decorations: Keep small items that could be choking hazards or fragile glass items that could break out of the reach of children and pets. Avoid using decorations that look like food or candy around children. Dispose of older ornaments that are chipped or cracked as they may contain lead-based paint or other toxic materials.

Driving: Be extra cautious when driving in bad weather. Allow additional driving time to reach your destination. Traffic may be heavier than usual with holiday travelers who are distracted or unfamiliar with the area. Be patient and drive defensively.

Electricity: Use only lights that have the UL Mark which means that the Underwriters Laboratories has tested them for safety. Read and follow package instructions for all electrical decorations. Products for indoor use should only be used indoors. Ensure that all cords are in good condition with no frayed or bare wires that can cause electrical shock or start a fire. Never use nails or staples to hang light strands. Use plastic hooks or clips designed for this purpose. Do not overload extension cords or wall outlets by plugging in too many decorations. Electrical cords should be kept out of traffic areas. Turn off or unplug all electrical decorations when leaving the house or going to bed.

Outdoor Decorations: Always use proper ladders or stepstools when installing outdoor decorations. Place on a firm, level surface to avoid falls. Use only wood or fiberglass ladders when working around electricity as metal conducts electricity. Anchor all lights and decorations firmly so they don't fall or blow over.

Shopping: Shop during the day if possible and always park in well-lighted areas. Avoid carrying large, heavy packages that block your vision as this can be a tripping hazard or can make you a target for purse snatchers. Carry your purse close to your body or under a jacket. Keep your wallet in your front pants pocket. Pickpockets know that shoppers are distracted during the holidays and watch for easy victims. Have your keys in hand as you approach your car. If anything appears suspicious, do not go to your

car. Return to the store and get help. Many stores provide loading assistance or even home delivery for a small fee. Never unload your shopping or personal items into your vehicle and return to the mall for more shopping. Thieves watch for valuables left in cars. Finally, shop with a buddy since criminals usually prey on individuals.

Stress: Plan ahead so you can be relaxed and organized. Being in a hurry can lead to accidents and injuries. Try not to have unrealistic expectations for the perfect holiday celebration to avoid disappointment. Limit holiday activities to those you truly enjoy. Take time for regular exercise and get enough sleep. Make a meal plan so you do not overindulge in treats. Establish a holiday budget and try to stick to it. Overspending increases holiday stress. Finally, realize that occasional feelings of nostalgia or the "holiday blues" are normal, but if intense feelings of sadness last more than two weeks, seek professional help. This could be a sign of serious depression.



Give a Gift of Safety

As you review your holiday gift list, consider giving a gift of safety. Following are a few suggestions that may increase the safety of recipients.

Battery Powered Flashlights and Radios with extra batteries: For use in power outages.

Emergency Preparedness Kit: These are available from sources like the American Red Cross or can be assembled in a backpack or duffel bag.

Fire Extinguisher: Every kitchen should contain an ABC type fire extinguisher that will work on ordinary combustibles, flammable liquids like grease, and electrical fires.

First Aid Kit: Most homes contain first aid items, but in an emergency it is convenient to have them together in a carrying case.

Smoke Detectors: Older homes may not have smoke detectors or they may be due for replacement (10 years). Batteries should be checked monthly.

Vehicle Emergency Kit: Depending on the climate, this could include blankets; compass; first aid kit; flares; flashlight with extra batteries; a shovel; nutritious food like energy bars, nuts or dried fruit; sand or cat litter for traction; and water.

Winter Fire Danger

The months of December through February are the most dangerous for residential fires. During these months, a fire breaks out in a home every two minutes, with three children killed in fires each day. Most of the deaths occur in the 26% of homes without working smoke detectors. Building and fire codes now require that smoke detectors be installed in each bedroom and in the hallway of each floor of a house. Homes built before the code requirement took effect may not be equipped with smoke detectors. Do not place smoke detectors in the kitchen since normal cooking can cause false alarms. If you do not have smoke detectors, purchase them at any home center or discount store. The cost is relatively low for the protection they provide and they are easy for homeowners to install. Smoke detector batteries should be replaced each year and the entire detector replaced every 10 years. Test the detector each month to ensure that everyone in the household knows what it sounds like and what to do if the alarm sounds.

Do not assume that you will smell smoke in your home in time to evacuate. Most residential fires occur at night and sleep dulls the sense of smell. You may also be overcome by smoke making it impossible to evacuate quickly.



Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Carbon monoxide is a gas created when household fuels do not burn completely. This is usually caused by malfunctioning heaters, blocked chimneys or cooking appliances used inappropriately for heating. Because carbon monoxide is tasteless and odorless, you may not be aware of its presence, making it even more dangerous. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are similar to flu symptoms and include dizziness, headache, drowsiness and upset stomach. Every year the news reports cases of carbon monoxide poisoning that result in death.

With the arrival of the winter heating season, houses are sealed up tighter and building heat is turned on. San Diego Gas and Electric (SDG&E) recommends these precautions to protect your family from carbon monoxide poisoning this winter:

1. Have a licensed contractor check your stove, water heater, furnace, wall heater, gas fireplace and clothes dryer to make sure they are in good working condition. Make recommended repairs before using these appliances.
2. Keep your fireplace clean and drafting properly. The damper should be fully open any time the fireplace is in use, even with a gas log. Do not assume it is open. Check the flue during the day when you can see daylight by looking up the chimney. Mark the open position for future reference. Do not close the flue until the fire is completely extinguished.
3. Do not use cooking appliances such as your oven for heating. They are not designed for this purpose and do not have proper venting. This can cause a dangerous accumulation of carbon monoxide.
4. Check all pilot lights and burner flames on gas appliances. Flames should be blue with tiny flecks of orange. A yellow flame may indicate incomplete combustion and the presence of carbon monoxide.
5. Clean the furnace and install new filters regularly to ensure efficient operation.

(continued on page 4)

6. Install a carbon monoxide detector in each sleeping area.

If your carbon monoxide detector sounds and you are experiencing flu-like symptoms, call **9-1-1** for medical assistance and get out of the house until help arrives. If you suspect the presence of carbon monoxide but no one is experiencing symptoms, shut off gas appliances, ventilate the house and call San Diego Gas and Electric at 1-800-411-7343 (SDGE). Consult the SDG&E web site at: <http://www.sdge.com/index.shtml> for more information about carbon monoxide and energy safety.

Reduce Holiday Waste

Between Thanksgiving and New Years, Americans produce one million extra tons of trash per week. Most of this waste ends up in our shrinking landfills. Be creative and help reduce the amount of holiday waste to be disposed of this year.

Greeting Cards: Review your list and see if it can be reduced. Electronic greetings are available and many are FREE! Postcards are cheaper to mail and don't require envelopes. Cards you receive can be re-used as gift tags or recycled with your mixed paper.

Gift-Wrap: Reduce excess gift-wrap by using reusable gift bags, just decorating the tops of boxes or tying a big bow around large gifts. Make the wrapping part of the gift such as a scarf, tea towel or basket. All paper gift-wrap and boxes can be recycled as mixed paper. Do not burn gift-wrap in fireplaces as some of the inks can be toxic.

Holiday Plants/Trees: All holiday plants can be recycled in green curbside bins. Trees should be cut into sections to fit in the bin or dropped off at community collection sites. Check with your local waste disposal service to find drop-off locations. Re-use live plants by planting in the yard after the holidays.

Tableware: Use cloth tablecloths and napkins instead of paper or plastic. They are reusable and create no waste. Ditch the paper plates and plastic forks and dine on the good dishes with real silverware. You and your guests are worth it!

Campus Safety After Dark

Now that daylight savings has ended and days are shorter, it's important to adjust habits to focus on safety while traveling on campus after dark. Be aware that the campus is a public place and the campus environment changes after dark. Be alert and aware of your surroundings to stay safe. Following these tips will help to keep you safe:

- * Use well-lit routes. Report any broken or burnt out lights to Physical Plant at 594-4754.
- * Walk with a partner or group after dark.
- * If you are alone after dark, use the campus Escort Service that is available from dusk until dawn between any campus locations. The call is free from any campus pay phone by dialing **5-1-1** or call **594-6659**.
- * Plan ahead and park in well-lit areas if you will be leaving campus after dark.
- * Have your keys in hand and check around and inside your car before entering.
- * Always lock your car when driving or parked.
- * Report any suspicious person or activity to Public Safety at **594-1991 (41991)** from campus phones.
- * Trust your instincts! If you feel unsafe, go to a secure location and call Public Safety at **594-1991 (41991)** for help. Their office is located in the Department of Public Safety Building near Peterson Gym and someone is there 24 hours a day.
- * Call **9-1-1** from a campus phone for any campus emergency. This will ensure the quickest response. Dialing **9-1-1** from a cell phone may send your call to San Diego Police or the California Highway Patrol.

The Department of Public Safety publishes the "SDSU Safety and Security Report" annually. It is on their web site at: <http://www.dps.sdsu.edu/> along with other valuable crime prevention and safety information or you can pick up a copy at the Department of Public Safety Building.

Remember that each member of the campus community is responsible for making the SDSU campus a safe place to learn and work.

