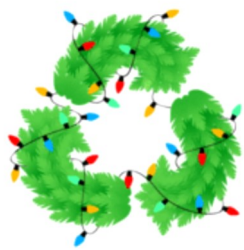


THE EHS CONNECTION

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & SAFETY NEWSLETTER—DECEMBER 2016



The holidays are a time to enjoy family and friends, and to reflect on what is most important to us. And there is nothing more important than providing a safe and secure home for your family. Have a safe and happy holiday season by following these simple, but often overlooked fire safety tips.

CHRISTMAS TREES

- **Artificial Trees:** When purchasing an artificial tree, look for one labeled "Fire Resistant." Although this label does not mean the tree won't catch fire, it does indicate the tree will resist burning and should extinguish quickly.
- **Selecting a Live Tree:** Needles on fresh trees should be green and hard to pull back from the branches. The needles should not break if the tree has been freshly cut. Old trees can be identified by bouncing the tree on the ground. If many needles fall off, the tree has been cut too long, has probably dried out and is a fire hazard. Remember to keep your tree **HYDRATED**.
- **Caring for your tree:** Do not place the tree close to a heat source, including a fireplace or heat vent. The heat will dry out the tree, causing it to be more easily ignited by heat, flame or sparks. Do not put your live tree up too early or leave it up for too long. Keep the tree stand filled with water at all times.
- **Disposing of the tree:** Never put tree branches or needles in a fireplace or wood burning stove. When the tree becomes dry, discard it promptly. The best way to dispose of your tree is to take it to a recycling center or have it hauled away by a community pick-up service.

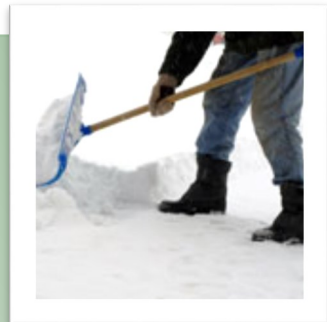
DECORATIONS

- Follow the manufacturer's instruction on how to use tree lights. Any string lights with worn, frayed or broken cords or loose bulb connections should not be used.
- Never use electric lights on a metal tree.
- Unplug Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to sleep.
- Never use lit candles to decorate a tree.
- If you use candles to decorate a room, make sure they are in stable holders and place them where they cannot be easily knocked over. Never leave a burning candle unattended.
- All holiday decorations should be nonflammable or flame-retardant; place them away from heat vents.
- Never put wrapping paper in a fireplace, it can throw off dangerous sparks and produce intense flames that can cause a chimney fire.
- Make sure that the lights and decorations you buy have the Underwriters Laboratories Certification Mark!

CHRISTMAS TREE SAFETY

SNOW SHOVELING SAFETY

There are plenty of potentially hazardous activities that go along with the holiday season and the start of winter, such as stringing up Christmas lights, navigating the icy roads, and hopping on those skis or other snow sports equipment, just to name a few. This is also the time of year when we break out the snow shovels and ice melt, so that we, and our neighbors and visitors, can safely navigate our walkways and sidewalks.



When considering the potential hazards of winter, snow shoveling probably doesn't come to mind as an obvious one, but it should. According to the U.S. Product and Safety Commission, more than 200,000 people visited the emergency room last year alone due to injuries sustained while shoveling or removing snow and ice. The most common snow shoveling injuries? Overworked muscles, back injuries, and broken bones (from falling), followed by heart problems. And those over the age of 55 were more than four times more likely to get injured while shoveling.

So, if you live in a snowy region, or have close friend or family members who do, here are a few tips to pass along covering ways to wield your shovel responsibly this winter:

- ◆ **Dress for the weather:** Don't try to shovel without gloves, sturdy boots, and a coat that is warm, yet breathable. This will keep your body at the right temperature and working the way it should as you engage in physical activity.
- ◆ **Warm up:** Just like any workout routine, make sure and warm up your muscles before you start, or start slowly to get warmed up before really digging in.
- ◆ **Use the right tool:** Purchase a decent quality shovel that feels right for your height and strength. Make sure it has a sturdy handle that won't break or twist off. If you're not that strong, choose a plastic blade rather than a heavier, metal one.
- ◆ **Practice good form:** Just as with any exercises at the gym, there is a proper way to shovel snow in order to avoid injury and strain. If possible, push the snow off to the side rather than lifting and depositing it. If you have to lift snow, use the correct lifting posture: back straight, knees slightly bent. Avoid extreme twisting motions.
- ◆ **Listen to your body:** Shoveling can be a truly strenuous activity, so don't push it. If you start to feel especially cold, hot, or exhausted, or if you feel pain, take a break.
- ◆ **Don't procrastinate:** The more you keep up with the snow, the less likely you are to get injured. So don't wait for the snow to accumulate; instead, shovel early and often.
- ◆ **Consult your doctor:** For some populations, snow shoveling is a truly dangerous activity because of the level of strain it can put on the heart. If you are older, pregnant, or have heart disease, be sure to run your snow shoveling plans by a physician.

Unfortunately, those of us who live in chilly climates cannot avoid the necessity of snow removal throughout the winter season. Follow these tips to be sure this common activity doesn't end up in injury or worse.



WINTER FALL PREVENTION

When winter snowflakes fall, so do people. One of the most threatening winter hazards is the potential to slip and fall on patches of ice and snow, causing serious injuries including lacerations, broken bones, and even traumatic brain injuries.

Prevention Tips

- Plan ahead. Plan your trips out around the weather. If you don't need to go out, don't. Wait for the weather and sidewalks to clear.
- Allow yourself enough time to get where you are going. Your chances of falling increase when you are running late and rush.
- Take the path of least resistance. Look for the safest route to your location, AND the safest route into the building. Choose alternate routes when necessary. For example, if the sidewalk or entrance you typically use is icy, find a different route that perhaps has been shoveled or has better sunshine for melting.
- Ask for help. Have someone help you cross the street or navigate an icy patch.
- Be your own advocate. If entrances or sidewalks are not safe, ask people to help remove the snow or use deicer. Businesses and property managers can help eliminate the dangers.
- Choose the right shoes. Be aware of your footwear and choose the boots or shoes that give you the greatest traction.
- Pay attention. Walk consciously. Be alert to the possibility that you could quickly slip on an unseen patch of ice. Avoid the temptation to run to catch a bus or beat traffic when crossing a street.
- Heed parking lots. Be extra careful getting in and out of your car. Hold on to your door or car as you get out to give yourself extra support. Watch for cars stopping and sliding in parking lots.
- Keep your vision sharp. Poor vision can make it harder to get around safely. Have your eyes checked every year and wear your glasses or contact lenses to help you see the most clearly.
- Walk like a penguin. When walking on ground that is slippery from ice and / or snow, take short, shuffling steps, curl your toes under and walk as flatfooted as possible.
- Keep your hands free. Wear gloves so you can keep your hands out of your pockets to help you balance. Avoid carrying heavy loads or children that may cause you to become off balance.
- Remove snow immediately. Keep your porch stoops, steps, walks and driveways free of ice by frequently applying ice melting granules. This is the best way to prevent formation of dangerous ice patches. Waiting for it to melt can sometimes take days!

TIPS FOR A SUSTAINABLE HOLIDAY SEASON



AT HOME...

Keep an Eye on Your Heat—Paying more attention to the heating in your home can not only help you save on your bills, but also reduce the amount of pollution you generate. Turn back the heat at night and when you're away. Keep your curtains closed. Turn your thermostat down by one degree when you're expecting company. You may be surprised how much impact these simple actions can have.

Defrost your Freezer—When ice builds up in your freezer, it actually has to use more electricity. Before the holidays defrost your freezer and it will (a) work more efficiently; and (b) create more space to store leftover food.

Use LED Lights in Decorating—Whether it be in your home, on your tree, or on the roof, use LED lights. You can now find them in every shape, size and color imaginable and they use about 33% less energy than traditional incandescent lights.

Give Unused Items Away—When prepping for the season, purging after an influx of new gear, or disposing of unwanted gifts, avoid cluttering the landfill and instead donate your items to a local charity.

WHILE SHOPPING:

Keep a Re-Useable Bag—How many stops are you going to be making into supermarkets and corner stores over the next few weeks? Keep a re-usable shopping bag in your car and avoid the countless plastic bags you would otherwise use.

Give the Gift of Experience—Gifts that are 'experiences' such as memberships, movie tickets, gift certificates, iTunes, and eBooks, as opposed to physical goods, will help you reduce your footprint this holidays.

Think About how you Wrap—Wrapping paper for presents contributes significantly to waste during the holiday season. Wrap gifts with recyclable brown paper, newspaper, or flyers. Reuse gift wrap from previous years. Save gift wrap and ribbons and bows this year.

Consider Alternatives to Greeting Cards—Millions and millions of cards are sold each Christmas. This means millions of envelopes and millions of stamps, and the costs associated with shipping as well. That's a lot of paper and a lot of weight to transport around the continent. Consider an email greeting or a more personal way to say 'Merry Christmas' – with a phone call!

Don't Idle Your Car—Though it feels natural to keep your car on while waiting for a few minutes, idling for more than 10 seconds uses more fuel than it takes to restart your vehicle. Turn off your engine and reduce the pollutants you're putting into the air.

FOR PARTIES:

Buy Local—A significant source of the environmental impact caused by over the season is the number of large holiday dinners that place. You can decrease the carbon footprint of your meals, support the local economy, and eat healthier by planning as much of your meals around local sources as you can.

Avoid Disposables—Though disposable cups, plates and cutlery can make life easier, they are bombarding our landfills with waste that isn't really necessary. Commit to washing your dishes, and if you're short borrow extra items from friends if necessary.

Leftovers Have Value!—Your leftovers don't have to be thrown into the garbage; your guests may have quite enjoyed your meal and so you might consider giving them some to take home. If you still have leftovers, this may be the perfect opportunity to begin composting.

Clean Green—When all of your guests have gone, clean up with safer, less-toxic cleaning products. Switching to non-toxic, all natural products (like your grandmother cleaned with!) is a simple way to be green and clean and protect your health.

THE STAFF AT ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & SAFETY WISHES EVERYONE A SAFE, HEALTHY AND HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON!!! Eric, Tim, Christine, Charlene, Carl and Lisa





DECEMBER WORD SEARCH

For a chance to win a great prize (more like an OK prize, but-hey, it's a PRIZE!), complete the Word Search and send it via e-mail to lisa.drake@oswego.edu OR through Campus Mail: Lisa Drake, 110 Lee Hall. Make sure to put your name on it! The winner for November was Paula Fredette. Look for: Artificial Tree, Fire Resistant, Extinguish, Live Tree, Needles, Freshly Cut, Fire Hazard, Hydrated, Recycling Center, Decorations, Lights, Worn, Frayed, Broken, Candles, Flame Retardant, Heat, Wrapping Paper, Fireplace, Sparks, Snow Shovel, Icy Roads, Navigate, Hazards, Gloves, Boots, Strenuous, Slip and Fall, Fall Prevention, Traction, Walk Consciously, Sustainable, Thermostat, Landfill, Reusable.

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CALVIN WISHES EVERYONE AND THEIR DOGGIES ALL THE BEST THIS HOLIDAY SEASON. HE'S BEEN A PRETTY GOOD BOY THIS YEAR, SO HE'S HOPING FOR LOTS OF TREATS AND TOYS IN HIS STOCKING!

DUTCHISM FOR DECEMBER:

*WINTER STORM
NIGHT FALLS,
SNOW SQUALLS,
WEATHER TEMPEST,
TRAFFIC STALLS.*