

# THE EHS CONNECTION

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & SAFETY NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2017



## PUT CHRISTMAS TREE SAFETY AT THE TOP OF YOUR LIST:

- ◊ When you purchase a live tree, make sure it's fresh. Needles should be green and springy to the touch.
- ◊ Cut 1 to 2 inches off the bottom of the trunk before placing the tree in the stand. A fresh cut allows the tree to absorb water. Place the tree in water right away.
- ◊ Fill the tree stand with water every day.
- ◊ Make sure the tree is at least 3 feet away from any heat source, like floor vents, fireplaces, radiators, candles or lamps.
- ◊ Make sure your tree is not blocking an exit.
- ◊ Always turn the tree lights off or unplug them before going to bed or leaving your home.
- ◊ Use lights that are approved by a national testing organization like UL.
- ◊ Replace lights that have worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections.
- ◊ Follow manufacturer's instructions for the number of light strands you can safely connect. Make sure you are using the right lights for indoors or outdoors.
- ◊ Remove your tree immediately after the holidays even if you think it is not dry.

## FACTS ABOUT HOME HOLIDAY FIRES

- \* One of every three home Christmas tree fires is caused by electrical problems.
- \* Although Christmas tree fires are not common, when they do occur, they are more likely to be serious. On average, one of every 31 reported home Christmas tree fires results in a death compared to an average of one death per 144 total reported home fires.
- \* A heat source too close to the tree causes one in every four of Christmas tree fires.
- \* December is the peak time of year for home candle fires.
- \* One-third of all candle fires start in the bedroom.

Source: National Fire Protection Association





# SUSTAINABLE HOLIDAY IDEAS



**Use sustainable gift-wrap.** Consider saving and re-using holiday wrapping paper just as your grandmother once did. Or wrap your gifts in pretty fabric that can be used for other purposes. You can re-gift gift bags again and again. Pillowcases can also make pretty gift wraps if done right.

**Decorate with energy-efficient lighting.** While many people still use standard incandescent holiday bulbs, decorative LED lights are now available in a variety of holiday shapes and colors. In addition to having a much longer lifespan than standard lights, LEDs also reduce fire risks because they stay cool to the touch. This would be one of the areas where you might spend a little more upfront, but save in the long run. Want to be even greener? Use light-sensor timers to turn your lights on and off.

**Give consumable gifts.** Most of us don't need more stuff—we're all "stuffed out." So consider giving the gift of services instead, or goods that can be consumed. Some ideas include massages, pedicures, tickets to sporting events, gift certificates for restaurants and other similar pampering treats. Other options would be to give consumable gifts that keep on giving all year long, like a membership to a wine of the month club or a monthly delivery of seasonal fruits grown locally.

**Make a donation in someone's name.** When someone has a passion in life, giving to an organization that supports his or her cause can be very meaningful. Whether you donate a flock of chicks to support a hungry family through Heifer International or fund the planting of trees through American Forest, you will be giving a gift that gives back and helps preserve the environment at the same time.

**Give the gift of time.** Schedule time to get together with friends and family for cookie exchanges or other meaningful holiday events.

**Treecycle.** If you have a cut tree, check with your local municipality to find out when they will pick it up for recycling. Fortunately, you'll be in good company. More than 30 million real Christmas trees are sold in the United States each year, but more than 90 percent are being recycled for mulch or chipped and used in parks and other public spaces.

## REDUCING AND REUSING

When gift giving, try an "experience" present, like tickets to a show, or a night at a hotel. It's something personal that isn't loaded up with all that packaging.

Buy sustainable. Many stores offer fair-trade products.

Real trees are great, but consider artificial. If buying a real tree, look for trees that are grown locally. Many are shipped from a great distance consuming fuel to bring them to local Christmas tree lots.

Take reusable bags with you when you go Christmas shopping. Don't let all that extra shopping generate extra plastic.

Save your money, save the environment and spare yourself from long hours of looking for the proper gift items at the mall. Start a trend: show you care with some thoughtful homemade gifts. Local, organic, nutritious food items freshly out of your kitchen can work very well.

When practicing your out-with-the-old, in-with-the-new New Year's routine, don't just throw out old toys, clothes, shoes and household items. All these items can be donated to organizations that support people less fortunate who would be happy to have them.





# SNOW BLOWER SAFETY



Finger injuries, including amputations, accounted for about half of the more than 3,300 estimated emergency-room visits related to snow blowers reported for 2012. Back and shoulder strain were also common. Here's how to protect against these and other injuries.

Never wear loose pants, jackets, or scarves, which can get tangled in a snow blower's moving parts and pull you in with them.

Wear earplugs or other hearing protection, especially with a gas-powered model, which typically runs above the 85 decibels at which hearing damage can occur.

Before the snow gets too deep, remove doormats, sleds, boards, wires, newspapers, and anything else from the area you'll clear to avoid clogs and damage to the machine.

Don't let children operate a snow blower. And keep people and pets far away from the vicinity of where you're clearing.

Protect yourself from carbon-monoxide poisoning by starting and running a gas-powered snow blower outside, never in a garage, shed, or other enclosed area—even if the door is open.

For an electric model, use an outdoor extension cord rated for your model, connected to an outlet with ground-fault-circuit-interrupting (GFCI) protection. Then be sure to keep the cord safely away from the spinning auger while working.

Turn off the engine of a gas snow blower or unplug the cord of an electric model before clearing a clog at the auger or discharge chute. And use a clearing tool or a broom handle to clear the clog—never your hands or feet, even if you're wearing gloves: A stationary auger and impeller are often under enough belt tension to harm hands and feet, even with the engine or electric motor off.

Wait until a gas model's engine is cool before refueling to avoid igniting the gasoline.

Remember, heavy exertion and cold temperatures can be a dangerous combination. Take frequent breaks to avoid overexertion. Seniors and people with hypertension, heart disease, or diabetes should consult a doctor before using a snow blower. If your driveway is especially long and two or more cars wide, consider having it plowed.







## 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.
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The Environmental Health & Safety Department would like to wish everyone Happy Holidays, Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy and Safe New Year!

Please join us in welcoming Fire Marshal Ken Ayhens to SUNY Oswego. Stop by 110 Lee Hall and introduce yourself. Ken can also be reached by phone at x3156 or by e-mail at [kenneth.ayhens@oswego.edu](mailto:kenneth.ayhens@oswego.edu)

**ERGONOMIC ASSESSMENT:** CHRISTINE BODY HAS BEEN DOING ERGONOMIC ASSESSMENTS SINCE 1996 AND IS AVAILABLE TO DO THEM HERE ON CAMPUS. SHE CAN BE REACHED AT 312-2770 AND WOULD BE HAPPY TO ASSIST YOU WITH ANY QUESTIONS OR ISSUES.

HAVE A SAFETY ISSUE OR CONCERN YOU'D LIKE TO REPORT? PLEASE CONTACT A MEMBER OF THE JOINT LABOR MANAGEMENT HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE:

**CSEA Members**

- Fred Matteson-Plumbing
- Mark Sierson-Plumbing
- Brian Bateman-BTC
- Joe Scanlon-BTC
- Donna Monette-Custodial
- Melana Perkins-Custodial
- Shirley McCarthy-Custodial
- Dan Hofer-Electrical
- Jason Hrcirik-CHP
- Roy Ayotte-CHP
- Sharon Cromie-Secretary

**Management Representatives**

- Mary DePentu-Maintenance and Operations
- Christine Body-EHS
- Charlene Walthert-EHS





# DECEMBER WORD SEARCH



For a chance to win a cool prize, complete the Word Search and send it via e-mail to [lisa.drake@oswego.edu](mailto: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 Lori Brand. Look for: Christmas Tree, Live, Fresh, Water, Lights, Unplug, Worn, Broken, Loose, Indoors, Outdoors, Fires, Electrical, Heat Source, Candle, Sustainable, Gift Bags, Energy Efficient, Stuff, Consumable, Donation, Reduce, Reuse, Snow Blower, Earplugs, Carbon Monoxide, Auger, Overexertion, Fall, Plan Ahead, Sidewalk, Icy, Traction, Slip, Melt.

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## Happy Holidays from Calvin!

Many people will be giving or receiving a pet for Christmas. PLEASE be aware of how much love and care a pet requires before you give or receive your new family member! And please don't forget that there are a LOT of pets in shelters who are looking for "fur"ever homes!

## DUTCHISM FOR DECEMBER

### LISTEN

Driving waves cascading on the shore  
 Swirling squall of snow abounds,  
 Each committed to a powerful voice  
 Echoing nature's melodic sounds.

