



# TDCJ Risk Management's Training Circular

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## December Holiday Safety

### **HOLIDAY season has arrived!**

We have the house to decorate, the outside lights need to be put up, the meal needs to be planned, pies need to be baked, sleeping arrangements need to be made for all the relatives coming, shopping needs to be done, and gifts need to be wrapped. This time of year is so busy, we don't know if we are coming or going.



### **Have we forgotten anything?**

We need to plan on making this holiday season joyous and safe for everyone. With a little careful planning and good decisions, this holiday will be a joy for your family and friends.



The holidays are a time for celebration, lots of cooking, home and office decorating which increases our risk of fires and accidents. Following a few guidelines will help keep your holidays safe.

### **CHRISTMAS TREES**

- \* If you are purchasing an artificial tree, look for the "Fire Resistant" label.
- \* When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness - shedding needles are a sign of a dry tree.
- \* Put your tree in a stable, non-tip stand, away from fireplaces, exits and portable heaters.
- \* Keep your tree watered every day.

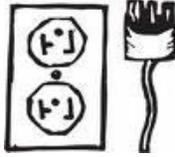


### **Safe Lighting**

- \* When selecting lights, extension cords or outside decorations, check the packaging or read the instructions carefully and look to see that the manufacturer has labeled the item as approved for use in exterior locations. Do not use any items outdoors unless it is designed for outdoor use.
- \* When you get ready to hang your lights, take a moment to check the bulbs, sockets, cords for nicks, cuts, broken insulation or exposed wires. **DO** not use damaged lights and cords.



- \* Most exterior extension cords have three-prong (grounded) male and female



plugs. Do not use any cord if the grounding leg has been removed or damaged.

- \* When using outdoor spotlights for exterior illuminations of decorations, use an approved lamp holder to hold the bulb. Most types have a gasket for sealing the bulb in the socket, and some types have a metal or plastic spike attached to stake the light to the ground.
- \* Turn off all lights when you go to bed or leave the house. The lights could short out and start a fire.



## Candles

- \* Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens.
- \* Keep candles in a sturdy holder and away from combustible materials such as curtains.
- \* Never leave a burning candle unattended.
- \* Keep candles out of reach of children.



- \* Refrain from using candles at work.
- \* Extinguish candles before going to bed or leaving the house.

## FIREPLACES

- \* Do not hang stockings near an open flame.
- \* Never burn paper in a fireplace-this is one of the major causes of chimney fires.
- \* If you decorate your mantel with live greenery or other flammable decorations, remove before these items before lighting a fire.
- \* Remove ashes in a metal container.
- \* Never store ashes in your house.



## Let's go shopping

Some people love Christmas shopping, while others would just like to twitch our nose and it be done. Some people start shopping early and are finished long before Christmas, while others wait, and wait, until the last minute.



Either way it has to be done. Be careful not to become a victim of crime while shopping, especially this time of the year.

- \* Lock your car and take all keys in the car with you.
- \* Don't leave valuables in plain sight in your car. Put packages in the trunk or out of sight.
- \* If shopping after dark, ask a friend or family member to accompany you.



- \* Park in a well-lit area. Remember where you parked your car!
- \* Have keys in your hand when exiting the shopping center to return to your car.
- \* Look inside and under your car before getting inside. **LOCK** the doors immediately!
- \* Keep your purse/wallet closed and secured. Don't leave them unattended.
- \* Be alert and aware of your surroundings at all times. If you notice anything that appears to be suspicious, Call for help immediately.



## TOYS AND GIFTS

Be especially careful when you choose toys for infants and small children. Be sure anything you give them is large enough to not get caught in their throat, nose or ears. Avoid toys with small parts that can be pulled or broken off. If you are giving toys to several children in one family, consider their age differences and the chances that younger children will want to play with other kids' toys.



## Alcohol, Parties and Driving

Being a smart party host or guest should include being sensible about alcoholic drinks. More than half of all traffic fatalities are alcohol-related. Use designated drivers, people who do not drink, to drive other guests home after a holiday party.



## PLANTS

Small children may think that holiday plants look good enough to eat. But many plants can cause severe stomach problems. Plants to watch out for include: mistletoe, holly berries, Jerusalem cherry, and amaryllis. Keep all of these plants out of children's reach.



## STRESS

The holiday season is one of the most stressful times of the year. You can't avoid stress completely, but you can give yourself some relief. Allow yourself enough time to do the things that need to be done. Take time out for yourself, relax, and enjoy the holiday season with your friends and family.

## FOOD AND COOKING

The holidays often mean preparing large meals for family and friends. Wash hands, utensils, sink, and anything else that has come in contact with raw poultry. Keep in mind that a stuffed bird takes longer to cook. For questions concerning holiday turkey preparation and cooking call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-800-535-4555. Refrigerate or freeze leftovers in covered shallow containers (less than two inches deep) within two hours after cooking. Date the leftovers for future use.



December is a joyous time of the year to enjoy your family and friends, but to millions of people around the world, this is one of the most depressing times of the year. Thousands of books have tried to answer the age old question "Why would someone want to kill themselves". To summarize the answer it can be put in three words: **"To stop pain"**. Sometimes this pain can be physical, more often it is emotional. In any case, suicide is not a random or senseless act, but an effective, if extreme, solution. Those left behind stand there in total shock wondering why and could I have stopped it, if only I had known some of the early warning signs. Those are questions that will never be answered.

## Suicide Prevention

### *Warning Signs:*

- \* Someone threatening to hurt or kill him/herself.
- \* Someone looking for ways to kill him/herself by seeking access to firearms, pills or other means.
- \* Someone talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide, when the behavior is out of the ordinary for that person.

### *Warning Emotions:*

- \* Hopelessness
- \* Rage, uncontrollable anger, seeking revenge
- \* Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities, seemingly without thinking
- \* Feeling trapped
- \* Increased alcohol or drug use
- \* Withdrawing from family, friends and society
- \* Anxiety, agitation, unable to sleep or sleeping all the time
- \* Dramatic mood changes
- \* No reason for living; no sense of purpose in life

### *Suicidal Thoughts and Feelings:*

- \* Can't stop the pain
- \* Can't think clearly
- \* Can't make decisions
- \* Can't see a way out
- \* Can't sleep, eat, or work
- \* Can't get out of this depression
- \* Can't make the sadness go away
- \* Can't see themselves as being worthwhile
- \* Can't get someone's attention
- \* Can't seem to get control
- \*

If you notice any of these suicidal signs in family, friends, staff or offenders, Contact Medical Staff or Mental Health Professional immediately.

On a final note: Please take the time this holiday to remember our troops who will be spending the holidays away for their loved ones.

## MERRY CHRISTMAS

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