



TDCJ Risk Management's  
*Training Circular*

Volume 11 Issue 12

Risk Management Issues

December 2011



# December

## Holiday Safety and Stress



### It can't be Christmas again!!

Jingle Bells, Jingle Bells, Jingle all the way! Oh, what fun it is to ride in a one-horse open sleigh. With the sound of Christmas music and the smell of fresh cut trees, we know that it is Christmas time again.

Do you get that warm fuzzy feeling when you think about winter and the holidays fast approaching or do you want to just take off running and screaming?

We have the house to decorate, the outside lights to put up, the meal to be planned, pies to be baked, sleeping arrangements to be made for all the relatives coming, shopping to be done, and gifts to be wrapped.

This time of year is so busy, we don't know if we are coming or going.

### Have we forgotten anything?

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.



### Safe Lighting

- " When selecting lights, extension cords or outside decorations, check the packaging and read the instructions carefully. 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, and cords for nicks, cuts, damaged 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.



## 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 is 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.

## Candles

-  Never use candles on a tree or near evergreens.
-  Keep candles in a sturdy holder and away from combustible materials such as curtains.

-  Never leave a candle unattended and always keep it out of reach of children.
-  Candles or any other open flame device is prohibited from being used in TDCJ areas.
-  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.
- " When cleaning the fireplace, place ashes in a metal container.
- " Never store ashes in your house.

## Let's go shopping

- " Avoid carrying large bulky packages that block your

vision or may cause you to fall. Use safe lifting techniques and ask for assistance when needed.

- " Use services offered by many stores such as an escort to your car or delivery to your office.
- " Keep money or credit cards separate from wallets or purses.

## 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.

## 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 holidays can be fun, but they also can be a source of great stress - and no wonder. The holidays are often depicted as a magical time when dreams come true.

## Do Financial Pressures Stress People Out to the Point of Ruining the Holiday Spirit?

Knowing your spending limit is also a way to relieve holiday stress. People believe that they have to go out and buy gifts because it's the holidays, even if they can't afford to do so.

Not only is it stressful to feel that you have to buy everyone an expensive gift, but you'll be stressed for the rest of the year trying to pay off your bills.

You can show love and caring by getting something that you know is meaningful and personal for that person that doesn't have to cost a lot.

## How Do Time Pressures Affect People Around the Holidays?

People shouldn't have to put their lives on pause or totally rearrange their schedules because of the holidays.

Learn to prioritize the invitations you accept and don't feel that you have to go to every holiday gathering.

## How Do You Cope With Kids Who Want Everything For The Holidays and Have No Sense of



## What Things Cost?

Parents need to teach their children to be realistic. It is OK to say to your child that a certain toy is too expensive.

Even Santa Claus has limited funds and has to choose what to give because he has a very long list. You can also tell your children that Mom and Dad and Santa Claus will try to choose the most suitable present for them.

Children have to learn that their wish is not someone's command and to curb their desires for instant gratification.

## Suicide Prevention

According to the Mayo Clinic, in the United States, suicide is the 11th-leading cause of death, with 32,000 suicides a year, or about 89 a day.

Among Americans ages 10 to 24, it's the third-leading cause

of death, accounting for about 4,600 deaths a year. Thousands of people ask the same age old question "Why would someone want to kill themselves". You can put it into three words: "To stop pain".

Often those left behind wonder why and if they could have stopped it if they had only known.

## Would you know the warning signs?

### Warning Signs:

- ☹ Someone threatening to hurt or kill him/herself.
- ☹ Someone looking for ways to harm or kill him/herself by seeking access to firearms, pills or other means.
- ☹ Someone talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide.

### Warning Emotions:

- ☹ Hopelessness
- ☹ Rage, uncontrollable anger, seeking revenge
- ☹ Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities, seemingly without thinking
- ☹ Feeling trapped
- ☹ Increase 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 to go on 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
- ☹ Can't eat
- ☹ Can't 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

## Individuals with suicidal thoughts need to understand that with help comes hope.

If you notice any of these suicidal signs in family or friends call the **National Suicide Prevention Hotline immediately. 1-800-273 TALK (8255).**

For staff and offenders, contact Medical Staff or Mental Health Professional immediately.

## Suicide is never the answer, but getting help IS the answer.

Please take time out of your busy holiday season to remember our troops who will be spending the holidays away from their families and



Training Circular  
TDCJ Risk Management Department  
Volume 11 Issue 12  
December 2011

Jackie Edwards  
Director, Administrative Review and Risk Management

Keith Clendennen  
Manager II  
Review and Standards

Robert C. Warren  
Program Administrator  
Risk Management

The *Training Circular*, a publication of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Risk Management Department, is published monthly in an effort to promote and enhance risk management awareness on issues relating to TDCJ employees. Design and layout of the *Training Circular* is performed by Robert Warren, Risk Management. Comments, suggestions and safety related items are welcome. Send Suggestions to:

Robert C. Warren  
Risk Management Department  
1060 hwy 190 east  
Huntsville, Texas 77340  
or,  
robert.c.warren@tdej.state.tx.us

All items received become property of the Risk Management Department unless otherwise agreed and are subject to be rewritten for length and clarity. Permission is hereby granted to reprint articles, provided source is cited.