

Subject: Holiday Safety**December 2012**

The holiday season is upon us, and with it comes decorations, additional cooking, and an increased number of visitors. With everything going on, it is critical that all employees keep an eye out for potential safety hazards. To help, OPWDD's Office of Physical Plant and Safety Services compiled this [holiday season alert](#) that will help make the season fun and safe for all:

Tree Safety: Real trees are NOT allowed in OPWDD homes or buildings.

- Make sure your artificial tree is at least three feet away from any heat source, including heating units, radiators, heat vents, or lights.
- Make sure the tree is in not blocking any exit.
- Use lights that have an independent testing laboratory label on them, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL).
- Some lights are specifically for indoor or outdoor use.
- Replace any string of lights with loose bulb connections, worn or broken cords.
- Connect no more than three strands of mini string light sets, unless manufacturer instructions allow different. Screw-in type bulbs should be limited to a maximum of 50.
- Read manufacturer's instructions for number of LED strands to connect.
- Do not run lighting cords through doors or windows. This will damage the wires.
- Always turn off Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.

Decorations: Candles are NOT permitted for use in OPWDD homes or buildings.

- Choose decorations that are flame resistant or flame retardant.
- Use clips, not nails, to hang lights so cords do not get damaged.
- Use multiple outlets for holiday lights to avoid overloading a circuit.
- Exterior lighting should be rated for outdoor use and only be plugged into a GFI receptacle.
- Decorations should not cover or hang into the clear openings of windows and doors.
- Use only approved UL 1363 power strips. Extension cords are prohibited.
- Never plug one power strip cord into another.
- Do not run electric cords under carpets.
- Inflatable and large yard decorations must not block address numbers or obstruct the means of egress and meeting places.
- Doors may not be "gift wrapped" or completely covered in decorations.

Entertaining: Everyone must follow the smoking policy in OPWDD certified homes or buildings, including holiday guests. Remind smokers that they must keep their smoking materials with them at all times.

- Remain in the kitchen while anything is cooking on the stovetop.
- Remember to keep entrances and exits easily accessible and safe for use in the event of an emergency.

These are just a few safety tips and reminders for the holiday season. For additional tips, please visit the National Fire Protection Association at [NFPA Christmas tree fires](#) or [NFPA holiday tree fact sheet](#) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov/family/holiday.

Have a happy, healthy, and safe holiday season!