

Holiday Safety Blast!

DIVISION OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES



A Special Quality Assurance Bulletin

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY

Your Partner For A Stronger Arizona

Holiday Residential Decorating "Do's" & "Don'ts"

—Marilyn Croci

QUALITY ASSURANCE MANAGER • ARIZONA TRAINING PROGRAM AT COOLIDGE

As we prepare for and celebrate the Holidays, it is important to make sure we are aware of everyone's safety when decorating.

Here are some **"do's"** & **"don'ts"** to remember:

DECORATION "DO's"

- use noncombustible or flame-resistant materials to decorate trees
- follow artificial snow directions on the can; may cause lung irritation
- avoid using small decorations or those with removable parts around individuals with pica behaviors

HOLIDAY TREE "DO's"

- only use artificial trees with "Fire Resistant" labels
- check for freshness of live trees (needles don't fall off tree or break)
- keep live trees well-watered (check daily)
- dispose of live trees at sites designated by your city/township

HOLIDAY INDOOR & OUTDOOR LIGHTS "DO's"

- only use only UL (Underwriter's Laboratory) approved lights
- make certain lights used outdoors are rated for such use
- use LED lights, if possible, for less heat & less chance of fire
- discard any damaged sets of lights: check for frayed or unprotected/exposed wiring, loose connections & broken sockets, etc.
- use only electric or battery operated candles
- turn off all lights when everyone goes to sleep or leaves the setting.

DECORATION "DON'Ts"

- block exits, exit paths or high traffic areas with decorations
- place electrical cords in traffic areas which can cause trips/falls
- hang decorations from sprinkler system heads or piping
- hang decorations from ceiling that would hinder/block sprinkler spray patterns

HOLIDAY TREE "DON'Ts"

- place trees by a heat source
- block exits, exit paths or high traffic areas with trees
- leave a live tree in the garage, carport, or against the side of a building when removing from the setting.

HOLIDAY INDOOR & OUTDOOR LIGHTS "DON'Ts"

- exceed the number of light strands recommended by the manufacturer
- use any type of burning candles: candlesticks, jar candles, votives, tea lights, etc. (NO OPEN FLAMES!)

Holiday Excitement & Stressors

—Peggy Lopez

DISTRICT EAST PROGRAM PROJECT SPECIALIST II

Stress and depression can ruin your Holidays and hurt your health. Being realistic, planning ahead, and seeking support can help ward off such unwelcomed seasonal guests. Considering the dizzying array of demands, such as parties, shopping, baking, cleaning, and entertaining, to name just a few stressors that can ever increase and lead to depression.

Here are some practical tips to help prevent Holiday stress from taking an emotional toll on you:

- **ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR FEELINGS**
- **REACH OUT WHEN FEELING LONELY OR ISOLATED**
- **BE REALISTIC - Accept your limitations & try something new!**
- **SET ASIDE DIFFERENCES WITH FAMILY & FRIENDS**
- **STICK TO A BUDGET**
- **PLAN AHEAD TO AVOID LAST MINUTE SCRAMBLING**
- **LEARN TO SAY "NO"**
- **DON'T ABANDON HEALTHY HABITS- No Holiday "Free-For-All!"**
- **TAKE A BREATHER- Take time for yourself!**
- **SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP IF YOU NEED IT**

Lastly, **TAKE CONTROL OF THE HOLIDAYS!** Don't let the Holidays become something you dread. Instead, take steps to prevent the stress and depression that may seem to overtake you during this time. Learn to recognize your "holiday triggers", such as financial pressures and personal demands, so you can combat them before they lead to a meltdown. With a little planning and some positive thinking, you can find peace and joy during the Holiday Season.

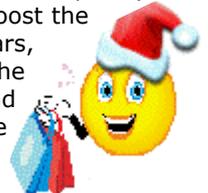
FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCE INFORMATION:
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/stress/MH00030>

Holiday Shopping Safety

—Pauline Selmer

DISTRICT SOUTH QUALITY ASSURANCE MANAGER

WOW! The biggest shopping days of the year are quickly approaching! We all want to do our part to boost the economy and spend those hard-earned dollars, but we want to shop in a way that makes the activity fun, keeps stress to a minimum, and above all, keeps everyone safe! The mere thought of "shopping" most likely elevates one's blood pressure!



First and foremost, take care of YOU! Get good sleep, eat a well-balanced diet, drink plenty of water, and keep yourself healthy. Go shopping and to parties/events when everyone is rested and energized, not when tired and irritable.

Holidays and crowds go together! Go shopping when most people are still at work or early in the day when malls have fewer crowds or patronize those shops where fewer people tend to go.

Crowded parking lots can be challenging! Never leave people unattended around or in a vehicle, and never leave a vehicle running. Always walk around a vehicle before getting in to ensure no one is at risk for being hit when backing out. Remember that predators and thieves look for easy targets!

Always be conscious of stranger-danger! Make sure the people you are with, especially those that are particularly friendly, know the risks in wandering too far away from you in crowded settings and unfamiliar places. Everyone in your group should carry minimal identification. Remember that predators and thieves look for easy targets!

Holiday Transportation Safety

—Onelia Soto

DISTRICT NORTH HABILITATION SERVICES PROGRAM MANAGER



The Holidays offer excellent opportunities for relaxing getaways and road trips to visit with friends and family. However, winter weather may bring sudden surprises that can ruin your trip! Extreme variations in Arizona's temperatures, rain, snow, ice, and dust do affect road and driving conditions, which can cause serious problems. Over 450,000 injury crashes occur annually in adverse weather conditions or on slick pavement, according to the U.S. Dept. of Transportation. Look ahead and be prepared for possible weather challenges during the Holidays. Before you load your vehicle and hit the road, take time to monitor weather forecasts on the radio, TV, or on the web, and prepare your vehicle for winter driving.

Here are a few cool driving tips to help make your winter trip safe and successful:

CHECK YOUR VEHICLE:

- ignition
- hoses
- fuel, emission & air filters
- brakes
- fan belts
- wiring
- fluid levels
- proper tire inflation
- battery
- antifreeze

Maintain a regular maintenance schedule.

ESSENTIAL SUPPLIES:

- cell phone
- snow brush
- reflective triangles
- working flashlight
- non-perishable foods (energy bars, non-salted nuts, dried fruits, candy)
- compass
- tire chains
- first aid kit
- blankets
- scissors and string/cord
- exterior windshield cleaner
- ice scraper
- bottled water

Be prepared with a "survival kit" that should always remain in the vehicle, and replenish the supplies after use.

DRIVING SAFELY ON ICY OR WET ROADS:

- Decrease your speed & leave plenty of room to stop.
- Brake gently to avoid skidding.
- If your wheels start to lock up, ease off the brake.
- Turn on your lights.
- Use low gears to keep traction.
- Don't use cruise control or overdrive on icy roads.
- Be especially careful on bridges, overpasses, and infrequently traveled roads, which will freeze first.
- Don't pass snow plows and sanding trucks.
- Don't assume your vehicle can handle all conditions.

FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCE INFORMATION:
<https://www.nhtsa.gov>

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Holiday Safety Blast is presented by Division of Developmental Disabilities' Central Office Quality Assurance Unit. Articles are researched and compiled by Quality Assurance staff and Division Managers. Any questions or feedback? Please contact Steven Stencil at SStencil@azdes.gov or 602-771-8122.

Holiday Choking Risks

—Linda Leary

DISTRICT CENTRAL QUALITY ASSURANCE MANAGER



The Holiday Season's trappings and traditions bring an unwelcome visitor: the increased likelihood of accidental poisoning or choking. It is important to be aware of potential **HOLIDAY HAZARDS** and take precautions. No one wants to have their Holidays ruined!

Dangers can include decorations of **MISTLETOE**, **HOLLY**, and **POINSETTIAS**. The berries and leaves can cause severe illness if eaten. Poinsettias can irritate the mouth and cause stomach cramps if swallowed.

BATTERIES are another danger! Swallowed batteries can cause choking, intestinal blockages and injuries, or poisoning from leaking contents. The small disc batteries can stick in the esophagus, obstructing it or causing severe burns.

If a potential poisoning occurs, staff should remain calm and immediately call for help. A resource to call is the **Banner Good Samaritan Poison & Drug Information Center Hotline at 1-800-222-1222**. Call **9-1-1** when in doubt!

Homemade candies, desserts, and hors d'oeuvres also present choking risks for many of our consumers. Several of these goodies are presented as bite-sized pieces which pose a choking hazard for all of us. Food items such as nuts, raw vegetables, popcorn, hard or gooey candy, shrimp, sausage, bread, etc., may need to be cut into smaller pieces for individuals identified "at risk" for aspiration or choking. A care-giver should be present at all times to monitor meal or snack times with these individuals.

Everyone enjoys visiting during the holidays. However, it is recommended not to talk or laugh with one's mouth full while

Wash Your Hands!

—Cathlene Potts, R.N.
QUALITY ASSURANCE UNIT

This time of year brings great excitement with the hustle and bustle of the Holidays. Many events and gatherings make the time fly by; except if you get sick! With the wonder of the holidays, comes the chance you may get caught by the cold and flu season.

The number one way to prevent the spread of infections is hand hygiene. Sound simple? It is!



Washing your hands with soap and water for fifteen (15) seconds or using an alcohol based hand rub to clean your hands is the key. Especially remember to wash your hands before preparing food, prior to eating, and after using the restroom. When you are on an outing, remember to wash or sanitize hands and keep hands away from your face.



Have to sneeze or got a cough? Cover it! Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, or the upper part of your sleeve, NOT YOUR HANDS! Afterwards, wash your hands.



Frequently clean areas of high usage, such as door knobs, handles, phones, countertops, cabinet fronts, etc.

FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCE INFORMATION:
<https://www.cdc.gov>
<https://www.handhygiene.org> (click on "Hand Hygiene")