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Fact Sheet

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

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Fact Sheet: Tips for staying safe this holiday season

Many Alaskans are decorating their homes for the holiday season. The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services reminds people to pay attention to these holiday safety tips:

Trees:

- Needles from your tree should be green and hard to pull back from the branches.
- If you bounce your tree on the floor or ground, only a few needles should fall off.
- Set up your tree away from a heat source to avoid drying it out too quickly.
- When you take your tree down or whenever it becomes too dry, dispose of it properly or by recycling.
- Artificial trees should be labeled "fire resistant" to resist burning.

Lights:

- Use cooler-burning LED lights as opposed to the larger bulbs that burn much hotter.
- Never hang lights on metal trees.
- Throw away any light strings that have cracked or broken sockets.
- Don't overload your extension cords. Check the label for their load capacity.
- Turn off your lights when you leave the house or go to bed.

Decorations:

- Use only flame-resistant and nonleaded metals to decorate your tree and home.
- When using a ladder, check the product label for appropriate placement. As a rule-of-thumb, an extension ladder (lean-to type) should be one foot away from the wall for every four feet of height.
- Never stand on the top step of a stepladder.
- Nationwide, candles cause \$539 million in property damage every year. December is the peak month for candle fires, and Christmas is the peak day. Do not put lit candles on trees. Extinguish all candles when you leave the room, or use flameless candles.

Fireplaces:

- Dispose of wrapping paper in the trash, and not in the fireplace or wood stove. It can cause flash fires.
- Keep "fire salts" away from children, as they contain heavy metals and can cause intense gastrointestinal irritation and vomiting if eaten.

This is an excellent time to check your smoke alarm and make sure it is working. Check out the Injury Prevention Web page for more tips on staying safe during the holiday season and all year long:

http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/ipems/injury_prevention/fire/

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