



## Toolbox Talk: Christmas Safety

### Introduction/Overview:

It is that time of year again when employees across the Commonwealth are preparing to enjoy the upcoming holiday season. However, while spending time with family and friends during this festive time, we want to remain vigilant of inherent safety issues to remain safe both at home and at work.

### Statistics:

According to the National Fire Protection Administration (NFPA), between [2015 and 2019](#), American firefighters responded on average to 160 Christmas tree fires annually. On average, two fatalities and 12 injuries occurred annually.

The following link gives an example detailing how fast a dry Christmas tree can burn:

<https://youtu.be/xr6b9b8FYKk>

Between the same years, American firefighters responded to [790](#) structure fires caused by decorations. For each of these years, on average, one fatality and 26 fire-related injuries occurred.

Additionally, on average, for the above years, candles caused [20](#) home fires each day.

### Talking Points:

- How to use [ladders](#) correctly:
  - Before use, inspect the ladder for any damage. Do not use the ladder if damaged.
  - Ensure extension ladders are extended a minimum of three feet over the top edge of the roof.
  - Obey the 4-to-1 rule. For extension ladders, for every 4 feet in height, pull the ladder's base one foot from the wall.
  - Stepladders should be fully unfolded and locked in place.
  - Only use ladders on a firm and level surface unless designed for slopes or steps.
  - Never place the ladder on top of other objects to increase the height of the ladder.
  - Never place a ladder in front of an unlocked door. Someone may open the door and cause an injury.
  - Always follow the attached labels and read the operator's manual.

Developed by:



- Decorations may increase the chance of a fire. Follow these steps to reduce the incident of fire:
  - Limit the number of decorations.
  - Never place decorations over exit doors or exit signage.
  - Ensure that all decorations are kept from heat sources.
  - Ensure all decorative lights are correctly installed.
  - Never link more than three strands together. (Refer to the operator's manual.)
  - Turn off all lights at the end of the day, including lights on the Christmas tree.
  - Use only non-flammable decorations such as electric candles.
  - If a live Christmas tree is approved for use in your office, ensure it is freshly cut and watered daily. If it becomes dry, discard it immediately.
  - Never place the tree near heat sources, including fireplaces.
  - Never plug GFCIs, power strips, or surge protectors in series, i.e., one into another.
  
- Holiday stress should be managed. Follow these tips to reduce holiday stress:
  - Plan holiday activities. Don't wait until the last minute to make plans. The more organized you are, the less stress you'll feel.
  - Don't skip meals. Proper nutrition is essential to keeping your energy up and avoiding headaches.
  - Stick to a regular bedtime and get enough sleep. Lack of rest increases stress levels.
  - Drink alcohol in moderation. Avoid it or switch to non-alcoholic drinks.
  - Remember, you cannot do it all. Scale back. Enlist the help of others.
  
- Parking lots and parking garage safety. As inclement weather and the holiday frenzy ramps up, remember these tips:
  - Do not walk and talk on the phone.
  - Do not use headphones.
  - When walking in a parking garage, stay to the sides of the aisle and look for cars.
  - When walking in a parking lot, make eye contact with any approaching driver. If you are not sure of the driver's intentions, then stop and let them go.
  - Use non-skid footwear in inclement weather.
  - Don't rely on hearing to know if a vehicle is coming. Rain can muffle car sounds, and many electric cars do not make much noise.
  - Above all, STAY ALERT!

Developed by:



**Additional Discussion Notes:**

---

---

---

**Final Thoughts:**

Remember, the holiday season should be a joyous time of year, but it can also be a dangerous time of year. So, remain alert, pay attention to your surroundings, and use good, sound judgment when decorating at home and work.

**NOTE:** Always promote discussion with the attendees. If a question comes up that no one in attendance can answer, please get in touch with DHRM/OWC/Loss Control Consultants for assistance.

**Terry Botts, COHC**  
Risk Management Director  
[terry.botts@dhrm.virginia.gov](mailto:terry.botts@dhrm.virginia.gov)  
804-712-3203

**Johnny Nugent**  
Risk Management Specialist  
[johnny.nugent@dhrm.virginia.gov](mailto:johnny.nugent@dhrm.virginia.gov)  
804-225-2168

**Lee Affholter, COSS, ASC**  
Loss Control Consultant  
[lee.affholter@dhrm.virginia.gov](mailto:lee.affholter@dhrm.virginia.gov)  
757-256-3364

**Curtis H. Stacy, MESH, ASC, COHC**  
Loss Control Consultant  
[curtis.stacy@dhrm.virginia.gov](mailto:curtis.stacy@dhrm.virginia.gov)  
434-594-8978

**References:**

Christmas-related fires.

<https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/Fire-causes-and-risks/Seasonal-fire-causes/Winter-holidays/Holiday-fires-by-the-numbers>



Christmas safety tips for the office and home. Ladders and stress.

[http://www.sbccd.org/~/\\_media/Files/SBCCD/District/EHS/Safety%20Newsletter/SBCCDHolidaySftyBulletin\\_EHSQ%20quarterlyDec.2014.pdf](http://www.sbccd.org/~/_media/Files/SBCCD/District/EHS/Safety%20Newsletter/SBCCDHolidaySftyBulletin_EHSQ%20quarterlyDec.2014.pdf)



Developed by: