



Think Safe. Think Family.™

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December Newsletter 2009

Tis' the season for hot chocolate sippin', Santa spottin', and shoppin'! As you make your list and check it twice, keep holiday season safety at the top of your to-do list. Whether you are painting the town red and green, visiting grandma', decorating for Papa Noel, lighting the menorah, or ringing in the New Year... **Think Safe. Think Family.** hopes you will follow these safety tips for a December to remember!

O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree.

It's time to deck the halls! Safely set the stage for holiday merriment by practicing these tips that cover you from selecting the perfect real or artificial tree to trimming it with lights and baubles.

- **ARTIFICIAL OR REAL?** Artificial trees are great for anyone with allergies. They last for years, and are always the same size and fit. However, there is nothing like the smell of a real Christmas tree. Whichever you choose, here are some helpful tips to make the most of your choice.
- **IF FRESH IS BEST.** Look for a tree with a healthy green coloring and few brown needles. Give the tree a shake and check the condition of the needles by gently bending them; if the tree is losing needles or they are snapping as you bend them, keep looking.
- **CUT LOOSE.** When you have selected the tree of your dreams, make a fresh, straight cut across the bottom of the trunk. Take off at least 2". This allows the trunk to take up water.
- **TAKING IT HOME.** Once you have selected your tree, be sure to secure it for the journey home. The tree of your dreams could become the tree of your nightmares if it were to fall from your vehicle on the ride home.
- **DRINK IT IN!** Fresh trees need plenty of water. A tree can easily take up as much as a gallon of water every day. If the water level ever drops below the fresh cut, it will seal over and need a new cut. Keeping your tree well hydrated will help you avoid a holiday fire hazard. As National Institute of Standards and Technology fire safety engineers say: REMEMBER, A WET TREE IS A SAFE TREE!
- **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE.** When purchasing an artificial tree, read the label to make sure it is fire retardant. While





artificial trees are, overall, safer than real trees – they still pose a hazard in your home.

- **TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT.** Never place any tree – real or artificial – within three feet of a heat source, such as a fireplace or portable heater.
- **THE LOW DOWN.** Trim the lower branches to avoid eye injuries if you have small children or pets. Hang breakable ornaments or those that have small, detachable parts or metal hooks, or that look like candy on higher branches where young children can't get to them.
- **FLUFFY-PROOF IT.** Of course, cats are great tree climbers! And what could be better than when you bring the great outdoors indoors! Keep your tree upright by keeping pets out of your tree room.
- **FIDO-PROOF IT.** Both cats and dogs can knock down and break glass ornaments and cut themselves. Put fragile ornaments on upper branches to avoid “paw-ventable” mishaps.
- **A TASTY SHOCK.** Pets may also injure themselves when they gnaw on electrical cords for Christmas-tree lights. Hide cords when possible. Or consider purchasing a pet-proof conduit, which will enclose cords and wires.
- **TAME THE FLAME.** Keep candles away from your tree, decorations and other combustible materials.

- **LIGHTS OUT WHEN YOU'RE OUT.** Turn off tree lights when you go to bed or leave the house. Use only UL-approved electrical decorations and extension cords, and check that no cords have frayed since you last used the lights.
- **MERRY AND BRIGHT.** Check all light sets for fraying, aging or heat damage. Discard any found to be problematic.
- **A ONE TO ONE CONNECTION.** Do not overload electrical outlets.
- **WHAT'S IN YOUR CHIMNEY?** Never burn Christmas-tree branches in your fireplace. It may cause a build-up of creosote, a highly flammable compound.
- **ONE-ON-ONE SUPERVISION.** Watch children when they are around the Christmas tree. They can pull at cords, lights and ornaments.
- **SAFE DISPOSAL.** When your tree starts dropping needles it is time to safely dispose of it. Do not place your tree inside your garage or against your house. The Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Coastal Restoration Division (CRD) has been conducting a Christmas Tree Fence Program. This program uses trees to help protect state's coastal wetlands.

For more information, contact DNR's Coastal Restoration Project Manager, Keith Lovell, (225) 342-0202 or visit www.dnr.louisiana.gov.





Shop Til' you Drop

While you are enjoying picking that perfect gift for your loved ones, a Grinch may be enjoying picking your pocket. Unfortunately, your chances of being a victim of theft increases during the months of November-January.

- **HEADS UP!** Keep your eyes up and take note of what's happening around you. Be sure to note what is happening behind you as well.
- **GET A GRIP.** Thieves look for easy pickings. Grip items firmly and avoid leaving them unattended.
- **LESS IS MORE.** An understated approach to holiday shopping is in order. Flashing cash and valuables may make you an object of desire.
- **TWO BY TWO.** Shopping is more fun when done with others. It's also the safest method.
- **PAPER OR PLASTIC?** Using debit or credit cards is safer than carrying a lot of cash. Thieves like fresh greens.
- **TIMING IS EVERYTHING.** Avoid going to an ATM early in the morning or late at night when fewer people are around. If you feel any uneasiness – do not approach the ATM.
- **LOCK IT IN.** Don't leave your packages visible inside your vehicle. Lock your gifts in the trunk of the car.
- **BRIGHT LIGHTS, BIG CITY.** Park close to your destination, even if it means waiting for a space to open. Choose a well-lit area. When you're coming back to your vehicle, keep your keys in hand, so you can get in quickly.
- **READY. SET. GO!** Keep your engine on until you're ready to leave your vehicle. Be sure to check your surroundings to make sure the area looks safe before you get out.
- **GOT KIDS?** Keep a keen eye on your tots each holiday season. Take their hands in parking lots and while crossing streets. Never leave children unattended.

Home Away from Home for the Holidays?

There is no place like home but holiday travel may mean making a hotel home. As you settle in be sure to keep your safety sensibilities. The following tips come from a presentation delivered by Larry Kaminer, owner of Personal Safety Training Group, during his appearance at the Louisiana Governor's Safety and Health Conference. Visit www.personalsafetygroup.com for more information.

- **SMALLER IS SMARTER.** We all know the big chains, but when choosing a hotel you want one where the staff is familiar with its guests. Select a hotel with a small lobby. This allows the staff to be more aware of guests coming and leaving.
- **PICKY PARKING.** Opt for a well lit and secure lot. If you choose to valet park, be sure the hotel does not put your room number on the card that will go on the dashboard. You want to be sure to keep your room number private. And never leave valuables in your vehicle - take them indoors with you, and ask the front desk to lock them in their safe.
- **SHHH.** A safer hotel protects privacy for guests checking in. Onlookers should not be able to hear your name or room number.
- **GOING UP.** If someone suspicious boards an elevator, aim to make a fast exit. If you are attacked press all floor buttons. This will cause the elevator to make several stops - providing you a chance to get noticed or get out.
- **YOUR ROOM AWAITS.** Room numbers should be written on the key envelope, not mentioned aloud or inscribed on the key—this way, anyone finding your key won't have access to your room.
- **PEEK-A-BOO.** Safer hotel rooms have double locks—one of which is a dead bolt—as well as a peephole. Check to be sure all locks on doors and windows are working. Upon entering your hotel room check the room thoroughly to make sure no one is hiding.
- **DO NOT DISTURB.** Why advertise that you're not in? Put up the "do not disturb sign" to signal that you are in the room - even when you aren't. If you really need your room cleaned ask housekeeping to come during breakfast or while you are there.
- **BE A "LOOK BOTH WAYS" QUICK STUDY.** Note your surroundings. Look left, right and behind you. Keep your head up. Sure, you may appear like a bobble-head doll, but, hey, a would-be attacker will think twice - preferring easier prey.
- **LOOK THE PART.** Be especially cautious when getting off of buses or trains, or when riding escalators as pickpockets

love these areas of transition. Look like you belong in the surroundings. Carry only one credit card and divide your money for small and large purchases. Never expose large amounts of cash.

- **THE INSIDE ADVANTAGE.** Keep your purse or wallet close to the front of your body. On sidewalks, keep your handbag and other valuables away from the street side and away from the opposite ramp while on escalators.

Ready for the Road or Take Off?

Holidays are filled with special gatherings and merriment making. Before you take to the road or take flight to meet with family and friends, be sure you are travel ready.

- **CHECK IT OUT!** Have your mechanic check your vehicle before you hit the road for the holidays. Pay special attention to your tires. Tires in poor condition make for bad mileage and dangerous driving. Don't forget the spare.
- **X MARKS THE SPOT.** Everyone loves an adventure – but only Santa knows the way to everyone's house. Have a GPS or map handy for your road trip. Plan ahead, know your route and check weather conditions. If you become lost, pull over to a safe place to get back on course.
- **KNOW YOUR FRIENDS.** Travel with emergency contacts in hand. Bring State Police information for each state through which you will travel.
- **THE WHOLE KIT AND CABOODLE.** Equip your vehicle with a travel safety kit. Items should include: jumper cables, flashlight, batteries, reflectors, water, fire extinguisher and basic tools.
- **UNDERCOVER.** No need to have uninvited guests visit your home. Use covered luggage tags to conceal your address. You may want to use your office address instead of your home address.
- **NEVER ALONE.** Taking a long flight? Keep an eye on your valuables. Wear a waist/fanny pack or a neck wallet ...especially while sleeping. Need a bathroom break? Be sure to take your valuables with you.
- **TAXI!** When you need a ride choose a marked tax. Also, be sure someone knows your final destination. If possible, provide a description of the driver and the license plate information to a colleague or family member. When traveling, be sure to keep your mobile phone close in case you need to call for help.



Look for the Safety Council to offer travel safety webinars by Larry Kaminer owner of Personal Safety Training Group—as heard at the Louisiana Governor's Safety & Health Conference.



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<http://twitter.com/SafeCommunity>



As you enter the holiday hustle and bustle, remember to put safety at the top of your list. **Think Safe. Think Family.** would like to wish you and your family a safe and happy holiday season. For more information about holiday safety, please visit www.tstf.com.