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## "Oh, There's No Place Like Home for the Holidays" - Especially When Safety Comes First!

By Mark Shaw



As the shopping begins for the sumptuous dishes that will delight the pallets of family and friends throughout this holiday season, let's take a few moments to better prepare ourselves for unexpected and unwelcome events which can be avoided with just a few simple reminders.

According to the Home Safety Council, fires and burns are the third leading cause of unintentional home injury and related deaths. Begin fire safety and survival with preparation in your household today.

Prevent Fires in the Kitchen:

- Always stay in the kitchen while cooking.
- Keep things that can burn, such as dishtowels, paper or plastic bags, and curtains at least three feet away from the range top.
- Before cooking, roll up sleeves and use oven mitts. Loose-fitting clothes can touch a hot burner and catch on fire.

Prevent Fires Caused by Heating:

- Store matches and lighters in a locked cabinet.
- Keep space heaters at least three feet away from things that can burn, such as curtains or stacks of newspaper. Always turn off heaters when leaving the room or going to bed.
- Have a service person inspect chimneys, fireplaces, wood and coal stoves and central furnaces once a year. Have them cleaned when necessary.
- Keep things that can burn away from your fireplace and keep a glass or metal screen in front of your fireplace.

Prevent Fires Caused by Candles:

- Never leave burning candles unattended. Do not allow children to keep candles or incense in their rooms.
- Always use stable, candle holders made of material that won't catch fire, such as metal, glass, etc.
- Blow out candles when adults leave the room.

In addition, according to the Home Safety Council, falls are the leading cause of unintentional home injury. Nearly 5.1 million injuries and 6000 deaths are a result of lost footing and tripping.

Correcting potential hazards around the home will reduce the risk of hospital visit during the holidays.

- All staircases should be protected by a banister; at the top of the staircase, make sure the banister curves inward towards the wall so no one will catch a sleeve in a straight banister

- Make sure all porches, hallways and stairwells are well lit.

- Use nightlights to illuminate the way during night-time hours.

- Keep steps clear of clutter.

- In homes with children, put away all games and toys that could be trip hazards. Use gates and barriers at the top of staircases for very young children.

- Keep floors clean. Promptly clean up grease, water or other spills.

- Make sure area rugs have a non-skid pad underneath.

Lastly, remember, it may have been a long time since the children left the nest, but many times we forget that child proofing a home for safety still applies for visiting children.

- Take all medicines and medical supplies out of purses, pockets and drawers.

Place them out of reach of little fingers. Child safety locks are available.

- Lock all dangerous items in a cabinet. Cosmetics (make up) can be poison too.

- If you discard pills, crush them and mix with kitty litter or coffee grounds before you throw them out. Pets and small children have been known to dig through and eat items in waste baskets.

- ALWAYS be cognizant of pool safety. Even in the cold winter months, children may wander outdoors.

That's it. And like Perry Como wishes in his holiday songs, I too, wish you and your loved ones all the best in health and safety during this holiday season!



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