

As quickly as you can jump over the candle stick Christmas and the New Year are upon us. With the Holidays come a variety of risks associated with the holiday season. From Christmas trees to the number of recitals and plays around the district, everything can present a liability or risk.

With this in mind Montana Schools Property and Liability Insurance Plan wanted to bring several holiday suggestions to all of you with this safety bulletin.

It seems that every year during the holiday break cold weather rolls down from Canada and freezes pipes in one location or another. With this in mind please ensure that there is a holiday break schedule for inspection of the school. Long periods without occupants often lead to extensive damage when water problems are not detected early. The best prepared have a schedule for maintenance or administration to check the facilities at least once a day during the holiday break. We strongly encourage this practice.

Holiday decorations are responsible for hundreds of fires and accidents nationwide each year. Following are several suggestions for a safe holiday this year.

Christmas Tree

- Purchase green, moist Christmas trees, never old or brittle. Check the needles. Try to find a tree with needles that bend instead of break.
- After purchasing the live tree, be sure to cut the bottom to expose new wood that will be able to soak up water.
- Always keep live trees watered.
- Keep trees (and other combustibles) away from ignition sources such as fireplaces, space heaters, candles, overhead lights and radiators.
- Ensure that artificial trees are fire resistant and UL (Underwriters Laboratory) or FM (Factory Manual) listed. This will ensure the tree has been manufactured and tested to meet specific standards.
- Make sure the base is steady so the tree won't tip over easily.

Christmas Lights and Extension Cords

- Only use UL or FM approved extension cords.
- Make sure the extension cord is large enough to carry the intended load. (The thicker the cord, the greater the load it should be able to carry without overheating.)
- Inspect the cord for damaged insulation, splices, or loose plugs before using. Never use an extension cord that has any of these conditions.
- Do not overload outlets! Use surge protectors if multiple outlets are needed.
- Immediately replace any broken bulbs that have exposed filaments.
- Never use electric lights on old metal artificial trees.
- Don't run cords through doorways or under rugs. The insulation on the cord can become damaged if the door closes on the cord, or if people step on it under the rug, causing a potential fire and/or shock hazard.
- Match plugs with outlets. All extension cords should have three prongs present. If an extension is missing one of these three prongs it needs to be taken out of service. The third prong is the grounding prong.

Recitals and Plays

Holiday programs always bring many visitors to the school. Always ensure that safety equipment is on hand and in good condition. Make certain that a snow removal plan is in place prior to and following all programs. Slip and fall accidents can ruin the holidays for a family if a relative injures themselves on a school sidewalk or stairs.

During the preparation for the program ensure that all electrical safety procedures are followed. Do not overload the plug-ins and never remove the third ground prong from three pronged plugs. Keep your school safe and make sure electrical safety is a first concern.

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