

July 2021

OVERVIEW OF FACT SHEET



There are multitudes of holidays celebrated from late November to mid-January where families and friends will gather. Oftentimes, these holidays include decorations. Unfortunately, there were an estimated 15,000 injuries seen in emergency rooms during this time due to holiday decorating, which has increased from year to year. An estimated 200 house fires occur during this time as well.

This fact sheet provides general tips about various activities during the winter holiday season and how you could prevent injuries or other incidents.



If you have any questions regarding winter holiday safety or other safety topics, please contact the [Environmental Health and Safety Office](mailto:EHSooffice@unc.edu) at 704-687-1111 or EHSooffice@unc.edu. You may also request a service or report a hazard on <https://safety.unc.edu/>.

Holiday Safety

Fire Safety [Watch Out for those Fire-Starters]

- Never leave burning candles unattended or burning near flammable items
- Keep candles out of reach of children or pets that may knock them over
- Check lights for fraying, bare spots, gaps in insulation or excessive kinking in wire
- Turn off all tree lights and decorations when not in use
- If using a natural tree, ensure it is well watered
- If using an artificial tree, choose one that is labeled fire resistant
- Keep trees and decorations away from fireplaces, radiators, or other heat sources
- When using a turkey fryer:
 - Set up the fryer more than 10 ft. away from buildings
 - Use thawed and dried meat
 - Fryer lid and handle can be very hot, use proper gloves or other tools
 - Have a fire extinguisher ready at all times

Food Safety [Don't Give the Gift of Food Poisoning]

- Wash your hands frequently when handling food
- Refrigerate food within two hours
- Use a food thermometer to ensure meat is thoroughly cooked
- Reheat leftovers to at least 165°F

General Safety [Avoid a Trip to the ER]

- Keep poisonous plants (ex: some Poinsettias) out of reach of children and pets
- Use a proper step ladder instead of chairs or other furniture to reach high areas
- Make sure paths are clear of decorations, cords, etc.
- Decorate a tree with little ones in mind – hang breakable ornaments at the top

Home Safety [Keep Friends and Family Safe]

- Test smoke alarms
- Tell guests about your home fire escape plan and assembly point
- Use a designated driver to ensure all your guests make it home safely
- Be prepared for heavy traffic while traveling



GROUP DISCUSSION TOPICS

- Does anyone know someone who suffered a house fire during the winter holiday season?
- What are several of the hazards associated with using a deep fryer?
- Why should you follow the above tips associated with food?
- Why do you think people often forget about safety during the holidays?
- What are some holiday hazards not discussed above?