



Diocese of Tucson Risk Management Newsletter

'Tis the Season

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Rejoice!

The holidays are upon us with much of our time taken up preparing liturgical celebrations, church events, personal travel, and gift-giving to name a few. As we look at our personal calendars, it seems like there are more things to do than time to do them. But each year, by the miracle of Christmas, somehow everything gets completed. However to complete our tasks, we sometimes take shortcuts, or we rush to finish, or don't use the proper tools and equipment, or simply do not take time to plan. And that's when accidents happen. So as we prepare for our celebrations and work to complete our tasks, we should do so with safety in mind. Please take time to click on the web links in this newsletter and print out the information to share with your staff — J.S.

"As carols fill your church this holiday season, take time to appreciate the history of your building and the people who have worshiped there before you. By keeping safety in mind, you can preserve this treasure for generations to come." - From Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company ©2011



'Tis the Season

Christmas Time Safety Precautions

The Diocese of Tucson recommends the following ideas to help make the season safe. Special decorations and festive gatherings are part of Christmas celebrations and require attention if accidents are to be prevented.

A. Christmas trees (real and artificial) and decorations placed in public areas (churches, halls, etc.) must be treated so that they are flame retardant or they must be made of a non-flammable material. CHECK WITH YOUR LOCAL FIRE STATION FOR SPECIFIC REGULATIONS.

"REAL CHRISTMAS TREES CAN PRESENT A SEVERE FIRE HAZARD, ESPECIALLY AS THEY DRY OUT. EVEN POTTED TREES CAN BECOME DANGEROUSLY DRY. Purchase the freshest tree possible and follow local fire station regulations and recommendations for trees and decorations in public and non-public areas (including those recommendations with reference to keeping the trunks of "real" trees in water). Always place trees and decorations away from sources of heat.

Once it is time to take the tree down, do so, and dispose of the tree immediately. DO NOT LEAVE A DRY TREE INSIDE OR NEXT TO A STRUCTURE WHERE IT COULD BECOME FUEL FOR A FIRE. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO BURN THE TREE IN A FIREPLACE, STOVE OR EVEN IN THE OPEN.

B. Christmas trees and decorations must be located so that they do not obstruct (and will not obstruct in case of falling) exits, exit signs, exit lights, fire alarms, fire sprinklers, fire extinguishers, etc.

C. All Christmas lights must be examined prior to use. Discard and replace light strings that are frayed, broken, etc. DO NOT REPAIR LIGHT STRINGS. All light strings must bear an Underwriters Laboratory "UL" listed seal. Lighting that is used outdoors must be specifically rated for such duty. Unplug lights when you are away.

CHECK WITH YOUR LOCAL FIRE STATION FOR REGULATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE SAFE USE OF CHRISTMAS LIGHTS.

D. The use of candles in conjunction with decorations and celebrations must be tightly controlled. DO NOT USE CANDLES ON CHRISTMAS TREES. Candleholders must be noncombustible. Candles should be placed well away from combustible materials and checked frequently. Consider using battery power electronic candles for processions. See Candle Safety below.

E. Make sure that parking lots, building approaches, and interior walking surfaces are well lighted and free of obstructions, holes, etc.

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Extension Cords

According to the Texas Department of Insurance, no more than three standard-sized light sets should be used per one extension cord. This should amount to a maximum of 200 miniature lights or 150 bigger lights. Additionally, only one extension cord should be used in one outlet. For outside lights, only use three-pronged extension cords that are approved for outdoor use. Christmas lights and extension cords should never be stapled in place.

For inside lights, place electrical cords in places where wire insulation won't wear down or be pinched. They shouldn't be placed under rugs. They should never cross pathways, door openings, or run down stairways.

They should also be kept away from animals and the Christmas tree's water supply.

Read more: www.livestrong.com/article/25549-christmas-lights-safety-tips/#ixzz1f27XzsvH

'Tis the Season

Portable Ladder Safety

Each year, about 50 workers are killed by falls from ladders. More than half of the deaths occur to people working from ladders. Twice as many falls occur stepping down compared to going up ladders. The main cause of falls from straight and extension ladders is sliding of the ladder base. For self supported ladders or stepladders, the main cause is tipping sideways. Many workers carrying ladders hurt their backs. This is a good time of year for your maintenance staff, and **ALL VOLUNTEERS** that will be decorating your church for the holidays to review our Ladder Safety Advisory.

For complete ladder safety information click on this link:

www.diocesetucson.org/LadderSafety111208.pdf

Candle Safety

The tranquil setting of a flickering candle can quickly become a towering inferno without the proper safety precautions. Damage from candle-related church fires range from a few thousand dollars to destruction costing millions of dollars – all as a result of misuse of candles. The average damage from a candle-related fire in a church is \$100,000. The majority of candle fires start in an unoccupied room and are not detected until the fire has spread.

Upon investigation, three main causes of candle fires quickly jump to the forefront:

1. Candles left unattended
2. Candles too close to flammable materials
3. Candles tipping over

Processions or vigils: As we observe Advent and Christmas, candlelit processions are very much part of our celebrations; often with children as participants. Special precautions should be taken. These events must use candles with **drip guards**, and participants must remain on non-combustible surfaces for the duration of the procession and follow at a safe distance from one another as not to set clothing on fire. Once the procession is complete, participants should immediately extinguish candles and continue to hold candles in an upright position until all wax and drippings have hardened. Candles then should immediately be collected as not to become distractions during the service. More candle safety information is available at www.diocesetucson.org/CandleSafety02-24-09.pdf

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A Glowing Reminder of Christ's Presence

By Susan Hines-Brigger

A Luminous Reminder

Candles serve as a constant and worthy reminder to us of God's presence in our lives. They are a gentle tap on the shoulder that, from that small flame, can come warmth, comfort, illumination— everything we could ever possibly need or desire. Their presence also reminds us that just as Jesus is light for us, we must also serve as light for others. Our faith is not meant to be kept to ourselves. Taken in that context, candles sure seem to take on a bigger meaning.

So the next time you witness the dancing of a candle's flame—be it in your church or in your home—stop and take a moment to soak it in. In our hectic and hurried lives, that small flicker can serve as a wonderful reminder to trust in God, the light of the world.—St. Anthony Messenger Press ©1996-2011