Holiday Safety Tips

- **Beware of Candles** – Be sure candles are kept away from decorations or other combustible materials. Don't leave children unattended in a room with lit candles, and always keep candles, as well as matches and lighters, out of the reach of children. Never use candles to decorate Christmas trees. Avoid using candles during parties. Never display lighted candles in windows or near exits. Consider using LED candles instead as they are very realistic and much safer!

- **Lights and Decorations** – When decorating with lights, illuminated or animated decorations be sure to purchase only those labeled by a testing laboratory. For outside decorations, use only items labeled for outdoor use and make sure extension cords are also labeled for outdoor use. Don't overload electrical outlets, follow the manufacturer’s instructions and always unplug all lights and decorations before leaving home or going to bed. Never use electrically powered lights on a metal Christmas tree.

- **Keep Christmas Trees Fresh** – Choose a fresh Christmas tree (make sure needles are not dry and falling off) and secure it in a sturdy stand. Check and add water daily. Place the tree away from heat sources such as heaters, fireplaces, and wood stoves. Do not place the tree where it blocks an exit, and if you purchase an artificial tree, be sure it is labeled as fire-retardant. **Note: Live trees are prohibited on campus.**

- **Preparing for Holiday Parties** – Try to find flame-retardant decorations or limit the amount of decorations. Keep all decorations away from heat sources and open flames. If guests will be smoking, provide them with large, deep ashtrays and check them frequently. After the party, check furniture including under upholstery cushions. Also check trash cans for cigarette butts that may be smoldering. If in doubt, take trash outside and douse with water. Do not leave trash cans that may have smoldering materials in the garage or under eaves.

- **Designate a Driver** – When attending a party, always designate a non-drinking driver. If you are the host of a holiday gathering, be sure there are non-alcoholic beverages available for guests who are driving. If needed, call a taxi for guests who are intoxicated – do not let them drive home regardless of how insistent they may be.

- **Inspect Fireplaces** – Have your chimney or woodstove flue inspected by a professional prior to the start of every heating season and cleaned if necessary. Creosote, a chemical substance that forms when wood burns, builds up in chimneys and can cause a chimney and potential attic fire if not properly cleaned. Always protect your family and home by using a sturdy screen when burning in fireplaces. Also check and replace the chimney cap and spark arrestor as needed to prevent sparks from landing on your or neighboring roofs.

- **Remember to burn only wood** – never burn paper or pine boughs, as this creates many burning embers which can escape the chimney cap and ignite your or a neighbor’s home. Never use flammable liquids to start a fire. If you are purchasing a factory-built fireplace, select one listed by a testing laboratory, and have it installed according to local codes. If you plan to hang stockings on your fireplace, do not use the fireplace for fires.
• **Be Cautious with Portable and Space Heaters** ~ Place heaters at least three feet (or one meter) away from anything combustible, including furniture, wallpaper, bedding, clothing, pets, and people. Never leave heaters operating when you are not in the room or when you go to bed. Don’t leave children or pets unattended with portable space heaters and be sure everyone knows that drying wet items such as gloves or other clothing on or over heaters can cause a fire. Do not use extension cords with heaters – always read and follow manufacturer safety instructions.

• **Cook with Care** ~ When cooking, do not wear loose fitting clothing that can be ignited by hot burners or open flames. Always turn pot handles in. Don't store items such as pot holders and towels on the stove top, above or near the stove where they could catch fire. Keep kitchen appliances clean and in good condition, and be sure they are turned off after use. This especially applies to toasters which should always be unplugged when not in use. Don't overload electrical outlets, and don't use appliances with frayed or damaged cords. Never leave cooking food unattended — especially when cooking with oil as it can quickly overheat and catch fire. Remember to never put water on a grease fire—instead cover with a lid, turn the heat source off and do not remove the lid until the pan is cool to the touch.

• **Buckle Up** ~ During the holiday months, people travel more than ever. Wearing a seat belt may prevent serious injury in a motor vehicle collision. Ensure that all passengers are also wearing safety belts. Please remember to seat children in the back seat of the car and only use approved safety seats for young children, according to local law. Drive the speed limit, or slower if weather conditions restrict vision, and if roads are wet or icy.

• **Prepare for Winter Storms** ~ Have extra blankets on hand and ensure that each member of your household has a warm coat, gloves or mittens, hat, and rain gear including water-resistant boots. Stay tuned for storm warnings by checking your local radio and television stations. Make sure you are prepared for power outages: [Power Outage Tips](#)