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Christmas Decor Safety Precautions

Creativity takes on its finest form at Christmas. As homes are decorated with lights, tinsel, and evergreens, the Texas Department of Health Resources. There's a lot of room for a mistake, however. Trees, lights, candles, trees and light trimmings, your fireplace and excess paper can be a source of trouble.

Center of most home decorations is the brilliantly lit and colorful tree, and it should be the place for starting your safety efforts.

In selecting a cut green tree, get one with a good green color. Needles of a fresh tree should be hard to pull from branches, and needles won't break when bent. Bounce the tree hard against the ground and you won't get a shower of needles if the tree is fresh.

Trees should be placed in a base which holds water, and this water should be checked regularly while the tree is up. Before mounting the tree, cut about two inches off the trunk to allow it to better absorb the water.

Placement of trees also is important, says the Department of Health Resources. Keep them away from stoves, fireplaces and radiation which could cause a tree to dry out quickly and perhaps catch fire.

What about decorations? Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens, decorations or wrapping paper. Candles should be in non-flammable holders and in locations where they cannot be knocked down or blown over.

In selecting lights, check for the Underwriters' Laboratories "UL" label. Check the instructions for use, and be sure that there are no frayed or bare wires. These could cause short circuits and perhaps a fire or a shock to the person installing them.

Outdoor lights should be waterproof. They are especially made for the outdoors. When away from home, or when you go to bed, turn off all lights.

And, never use electric lights on metal trees. Trimmings for trees and elsewhere in the home should be of flame-retardant material, something that won't flare up if accidentally ignited.

If there are small children in the home, care should be taken in selecting decorations. The United States Product Safety Commission urges parents to avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable—including bubbly tree lights. It also warns against trim with small removable parts that could be swallowed or inhaled.

Matches, lighters and candles should be kept out of the reach of children. Children and adults should avoid the wearing of loose, flowing clothes—especially long, open sleeves—near the open flames of a fireplace, stove or candle-lit table.

Here's another reminder about children's toys. Efforts have been made to remove dangerous toys from retail stores. But, a safe toy in the hands of one child may be unsafe if used by a younger one.

When purchasing a toy, look for a warning label stating that the toy isn't recommended for a child under a certain age. If the label warns that the toy is too advanced for the child in mind, the purchaser should help the warning and find one to fit the child. This will help reduce the chance of injury.

And, once those presents under the tree have been opened, gather up all those wrappings from the tree and fireplace area and remove them from the house. Christmas should be a joyous occasion. Keep it that way by planning for safety.

For more information, contact the Texas Department of Health Resources. It will add to your enjoyment of the season to know that you and your loved ones are as safe as possible.

This Christmas give a Headlight subscription. Call 234-2783.

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Let's Look Back

(August 16, 1951)

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Columbus School Bd. Hires Youens as Tax Assessor

The Columbus school board voted Tuesday night, Dec. 9 to hire Billy Youens, a former teacher, as the school system's fulltime tax assessor-collector.

The job will pay about \$4,000 a year. The board voted unanimously after closing itself in an executive session. Superintendent John Saul said the board considered five applicants.

Saul said the school tax office will be open Jan. 2. In a related move, the board voted to enter a contract with Ad Valorem Records, Inc. of Houston which will provide a computer and accounting service on the tax roll.

The data processing firm will maintain the tax roll and prepare the tax statements, along with additional bookkeeping services dealing with taxable properties. The cost will be about \$4,500 a year.

The firm will not assess property or have any responsibility in the assessing of property. That will be handled solely by the tax assessor-collector and the equalization board. -Colorado County Citizen.

school year is \$106,000 greater than was necessary in the 1974-75 year, before the governor's new plan was put into effect. -Weimar Mercury

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