



Do the holidays have you jumping through hoops?

Don't let CRIME complicate matters!

Try our

## **HOLIDAY PERSONAL SAFETY & SECURITY TIPS**

### **When you travel, plan ahead!**

If traveling by vehicle, know where you are going and how to get there and back. Obtain a map or download the latest available GPS data. **Check for construction detours**; for longer trips, get a weather forecast.

**If traveling out-of-state**, most states and/or state law enforcement agencies provide road-and-highway information either on-line or at a 1-800 number; **check** to see what conditions they report before leaving. Visit the Federal Highway Administration's related webpage for national, regional, and state-by-state **links** regarding traffic, closures, and other conditions.

#### **"National Traffic and Road Closure Information"**

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/trafficinfo/index.htm>

Inform a family member where you will be and when to expect you back; give them your route if they don't know it.

#### **Travel and conduct your business during daylight hours if possible.**

To the extent practical, select well-traveled and lighted thoroughfares. Bear in mind that routes that are congested during rush hour may be very lightly traveled at other hours. Use freeways and arterial streets and avoid less-traveled roads as much as possible, especially when driving at night or in unfamiliar locations.

**If you have access to a cellular telephone, carry or take it (but don't use it while driving; this is now unlawful in many states).**



If possible, know the emergency cell codes for the area you're in. For example, in Illinois, remember that

**\*999 = 911**

(Illinois Highway Patrol)

**When driving, keep doors locked and windows rolled up at all times. Maintain at least half**

a tank of fuel, and keep vehicle in good repair.

If planning a "road trip" over the holidays, have your vehicle serviced and checked out sufficiently far ahead to allow for repairs if needed. Don't forget to have the mechanic check your spare tire and all fluid levels along with the other preventive maintenance procedures.



Consider keeping spare fuses and a "breakdown kit" in your vehicle at all times. Breakdown kits may be purchased from a variety of sources, or you can assemble your own at any auto parts or hardware store using a commercial version as a guideline.

**Minimally, a "breakdown kit" should include:**

- a thermal blanket/bag and a gallon of water
- a "HELP" sign/flag and flares/reflectors
- a flashlight (*check batteries semi-annually*)
- duct tape
- a set of jumper cables, a tire gauge, and work gloves
- a few hand tools (*pliers, screwdrivers, Allen wrenches*)

**Also consider carrying:**

- some rope and at least one bungee cord
- towels and a roll of toilet paper (*in a plastic bag*)
- a small 12-volt tire-inflator
- an empty (*new, never used*) one-gallon gas can
- change for a payphone and a pair of comfortable shoes
- a cheap/disposable rain coat/suit/poncho



All these items can fit in a small or medium size gym/duffle bag or a box and kept in your vehicle's trunk, back-seat floorboard, or other storage area in the vehicle. Keep it updated, but **never remove it** from your vehicle.

In addition to your basic "breakdown kit" you should also have a **basic first aid kit** in your vehicle at all times.



Also consider purchasing and mounting a small ABC-rated **portable fire extinguisher** in your vehicle. Buy one with a "mount" designed for use in vehicles. Portable fire extinguishers should be **securely "mounted"** in the vehicle to prevent rolling and damage. The extinguisher should be visible and easy to reach. Mount the bracket on a strong, stable surface. It can be mounted in any sloping, vertical or horizontal position.

**Know how to access your spare tire and jack.** Vehicle owners should also consider obtaining towing insurance, either as a rider on their automobile insurance policy (*such riders are usually very inexpensive for excellent coverage*) or by joining an automobile club or other provider. Be prepared!

"It doesn't cost any more to keep the **top** quarter of your tank filled than it does to keep the **bottom** quarter filled. "Even if you're pressed for time, take the few minutes needed to fill up the tank. Making a habit of checking your fuel gauge whenever you start driving, and routinely "topping off" your tank, can prevent unexpected, untimely and dangerous roadside emergency situations.



## The single-most essential safety tip: **Devote your full time and attention to driving!**

**Resist distraction.** If you feel yourself getting tired, pull over and take a break (*at a safe location where there are other people and light*).

Develop the habit of **scanning** for situational awareness. **Use your mirrors frequently** to check behind and to your sides. **Look ahead**, as far down the road as possible, to anticipate slow-downs, stops, snarls, crashes, emergencies, or other events which will affect traffic flow. Avoid the **"tunnel vision"** which often occurs during monotonous highway driving as you focus only immediately ahead or where your headlights reach.

**If you experience a breakdown**, pull as far onto the shoulder as possible and turn your emergency flashers on. If you have a cellular phone, summon assistance from a reputable source or call for law enforcement response. Otherwise, raise your hood or tie a streamer to your antenna, and await assistance inside your locked vehicle.

If a stranger stops, speak to them through a partially rolled-down window, and ask them to go to a phone and call police or a tow service; do not exit your vehicle until a law enforcement officer or tow operator are on scene. On longer trips, be sure you have water, food, and blankets in the vehicle.

Should you observe anyone pulled off the roadway and apparently stranded or in need of assistance, extend them the courtesy of reporting your observation to the police at your earliest opportunity.

**NEVER** pick up hitchhikers (*your parents were right!*)

**If involved in a property-damage collision** in an unfamiliar or potentially unsafe location, do not open or exit your vehicle. If you have a cellular telephone, summon law enforcement. If not, acknowledge the accident by hand signal, and motion the other driver to proceed with you to a safe location (*where there are other people and light*) to exchange information. If unable to proceed, honk the horn to attract attention and ask a passer-by to summon police.

Criminals sometimes **deliberately cause** minor car crashes in order to rob the occupants or steal the vehicle (*so-called "bump-and-rob" or carjacking*). If you are involved in a collision **which seems suspicious, remain in your vehicle**. Get as far off the roadway as possible, and turn on your emergency flashers. Do NOT get out to inspect for damage or to exchange information.

Summon a law enforcement officer or signal the other driver to follow you to a location where you can safely do so. If necessary, sound the horn to attract attention and await help while secure in your vehicle.



If the driver of another vehicle tries to force you off the road, **do not stop**. Slow to a safe speed, and proceed to a **safe** location. Try to obtain the license plate number and a description of the other vehicle and its driver and any occupants. Report the occurrence to the police at your **earliest opportunity**.

Keep your car **in gear** while stopped at traffic signals or signs. If approached in a threatening manner, honk the horn to attract attention and drive away (*as you can do so safely*).

Consider car-pooling or ride sharing only **IF** you have a dependable means of assuring that the other participants are legitimate and safe. Some jurisdictions maintain a central coordinating office for such services; check your telephone directory or on-line. Ride sharing for long trips is NOT recommended unless you are personally acquainted with the other party and fully trust them and have confidence in their driving ability and common sense. Remember; your life is literally in their hands while they're behind the wheel.

**Before your trip** — Consider leaving a copy of your travel itinerary with a trusted family friend or relative (*plus a driving route map or flight/bus/train trip info*).

**If signaled to stop by any vehicle** other than a clearly marked law enforcement unit, acknowledge the signal, and wave the driver to follow you to a safe location (where there are other people and light). Drive within the speed limit and take the shortest possible route to the nearest safe place. If you have a cellular phone, **dial 9-1-1**, tell the call-taker you are being followed by an unmarked vehicle attempting to stop you, and ask them to send a marked law enforcement vehicle to your location.



#### **When parking...**

**roll up** the windows, **lock** the vehicle, take the **keys**, and insure your valuables are **concealed** (*preferably in the trunk*). During hours of darkness, park and walk in **lighted** areas to the extent possible.

While carrying large amounts of cash should be avoided, you should have enough small bills and change to cover on-the-road purchases, including fuel should you run low while in an area where stations don't accept the cards you carry. Enough for a half-tank fillup, taxi or bus fare, snacks and drinks or a phone call should be sufficient. Traveler's checks are safer, but are not universally accepted. Keep your wallet, purse, and any other valuables on your person or otherwise out of sight, NOT on the seat next to you.

If you must leave valuable items in your car while out and about, place items out of sight before reaching your destination or move them inconspicuously. This includes packages, backpacks, gym bags, GPS units, MP3 players, and so forth. Someone may be watching when you put items under/behind a seat or throw something over them. An opportunistic thief is on the lookout for "trunk-packing", and can break into your car the minute you're out of sight.

One reason SUVs and pickups are common auto-burglary targets is because they don't have a "trunk" to hold valuables — the driver/passenger generally just "hides" their valuables "out of sight". The thieves know this, and do check glove compartments, behind seats, and under seats. It only takes a few seconds to check all the "usual" hiding places.

Unobtrusively locking everything valuable "in the trunk" (*if you have one*) may be difficult when you're combining errands at multiple destinations. Certainly avoid leaving packages or shopping bags **visible** in your car — lock them in the trunk out of sight if you have to leave packages in your car unattended.

Plan your shopping/errands so that you don't load your trunk until you are **ready to drive to another destination**. Load your trunk when you **leave** a location — never open a trunk, fill it full of valuables, close it, and then just walk away to do more shopping or other errands.

## WHAT IS YOUR CAR SCREAMING OUT TO THIEVES?



**When returning to your vehicle**, carry your keys in your hand and be ready to unlock the door and enter as quickly as possible. As you approach your vehicle, scan the area, glance underneath the vehicle, and take a quick look inside before entering.

### **While out and about, present an alert appearance.**

Be aware of your surroundings; scan the area from time to time. Avoid concentrating so hard on shopping that you fail to keep track of your surroundings, others near you, or your personal property.

- Wear conservative, comfortable clothing.
- Grip carried items firmly and avoid leaving them unattended.
- Carry minimal cash and valuables, wear minimal jewelry.



**Shop with friends or relatives if possible; there IS safety in numbers.** As you shop, be alert in crowded places. Among pickpockets' favorites are revolving doors, jammed aisles, elevators, and public transportation stops and vehicles, especially at rush hour. Carry the day's most expensive purchases closest to your body, and don't carry so much you lose the ability to react quickly.

If possible, leave your children with a baby-sitter while you are shopping. For holiday shopping, consider making arrangements with family or friends/neighbors, and take turns baby-sitting. If you take your children with you, **keep a close eye on them while shopping.**

Teach your children to go to a store clerk or security guard if they ever get separated from you in a store/mall, and be sure they know their first and last name so they can tell someone who they are. It's best to keep children under four (4) in a stroller. Children in shopping carts should be properly belted and seated in the child carrier area at all times —never let your child stand in or push a shopping cart.

Return to your vehicle periodically to check on it and reduce the amount you are carrying and must keep track of. Store packages in the trunk or, if your vehicle doesn't have one, out of plain view (*on the floorboard, under a blanket or clothes, etc*). When possible, have purchases delivered instead of taking them with you; many businesses offer free delivery during the holiday shopping season. Ask for an escort to your car if you feel nervous.

Return to the mall or store for assistance if you spot suspicious activity near your vehicle. Stay alert while loading items into or out of the vehicle or arranging cargo stowage. If someone

approaches, and you feel threatened, get in and lock up until they leave the area; if they loiter, drive away.

**Using debit or credit cards is much safer than carrying a lot of cash.** If the vendors you will visit don't take cards, consider obtaining traveler's checks which, unlike cash, can be replaced if lost or stolen. Visit ATM's only at well-lighted and populated locations; visit during daylight hours if possible.

Using the drive-up is usually safer than walking up or into a banking facility. Remember to scan around you as you make your withdrawal. Many ATMs now have "fisheye" mirrors mounted above the keyboard to enable you to view the entire surrounding area while conducting business; try to patronize ATMs so-equipped, and use the mirror!

**If anyone is loitering, or you don't like their looks, go to another ATM.** Stand such that those behind you cannot see your PIN as you enter it; your PIN should NEVER be written down on or carried with your ATM card.

**Be observant.** Avoid dark areas, short-cuts, cul-de-sacs, and suspicious persons. Stay near light and people.

**Be prepared to flee potential problems.** If apprehensive about any location for any reason, leave. Consider carrying a whistle. Weapons are not recommended, and may be unlawful.



**If followed —  
On Foot:**

1. Cross the street
2. Vary your pace
3. Change direction

**By Vehicle**

1. Execute several right turns to verify
2. Get and stay on arterial streets
3. Note and record:
  - o license plate number - description of vehicle and occupant(s)

If followed by a vehicle while you are on foot, turn and walk the "wrong way" onto a One-Way Street, if possible. If follower persists, go to an occupied and lighted location (*convenience store, fire station, police station*) and summon police.



**Confine your charitable giving to reputable established organizations, preferably those with a local branch.**

If solicited by an individual for personal charity, don't give cash; offer to buy the individual food or drink or refer them to local assistance resources.

If solicited for an unfamiliar organized charity, ask for literature so you can make an informed decision about giving; any reputable organization will be glad to provide material or a website address where you can check them out.

To avoid telephone solicitation to the extent possible, sign up for the ["National Do-Not Call List"](#). If solicited by telephone despite being on the list, simply hang up — it's your phone. If you choose to speak to the solicitor, do not give out credit card numbers or personal information not listed in the telephone directory, and don't allow the organization to come to your home until you are certain of their reliability. Instead, ask them to send you information so you can make an informed decision and mail in your donation.

With the exception of local organizations, door-to-door sales are often fraudulent, and should be viewed with skepticism. If it sounds too good to be true, it usually is.

Under consumer protection laws, you have a right to written information about any offer, and the right to cancel any order within three days should you reconsider your decision.

Make sure you obtain enough information to enable you to re-contact the vendor or his/her office in the event you have questions or change your mind. If you don't want to be bothered by door-to-door solicitors, most locations have a law that solicitors must avoid homes which display a "NO SOLICITORS" sign; bear in mind this usually doesn't apply to religious proselytizing, charitable organizations or political workers.

**Promptly report suspicious persons, vehicles, and crimes to the local law enforcement agency by calling 9-1-1.**

## Traveling by air?



—Visit the [Transportation Security Administration's website](#) and check out these pages...

- ["Air Travel — For Travelers..."](#)
- [Prohibited Items](#)
- [Airport/Date/Time-Specific Security Checkpoint Wait Times](#)

### Did you know? —

Locking Your Checked Baggage: In some cases **screeners** will have to **open** your baggage as part of the screening process.

If your bag is unlocked then Transportation Security Administration (TSA) screeners will simply open and screen the baggage.

**However**, if you decide to **lock** your checked baggage, and TSA cannot open your checked baggage through other means, then **the locks may have to be broken**.

TSA is not liable for damage caused to locked bags that must be opened for security purposes.

TSA suggests that you help prevent the need to break your locks by using a [TSA recognized locking mechanism](#). These "[special](#)" locks can be opened by TSA using tools provided by the luggage industry.

For more information, see the TSA webpage, "[TSA Recognized Baggage Locks](#)".

And, from the  
FAA's Air Traffic Control System Command Center,

[Current Flight Delay Information](#)  
*(This page/information automatically refreshes every 60 seconds)*

And,  
from the Department of Transportation's  
"Aviation Consumer Protection Division"—

[Travel Tips & Publications](#)

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## Forewarned is forewarned: Know the SCAMS

There are many criminals that specifically target "travelers". Visit [Wikitravel](#) ([http://wikitravel.org/en/Common\\_scams](http://wikitravel.org/en/Common_scams)) for a listing of many [common scams](#).

Also see the FTC's [travel fraud](#) webpage. (<http://www.ftc.gov/opa/reporter/travel.shtm>)

## Home Holiday Safety Decorating Tips



### General tips:

Assemble and inspect all tools and materials before beginning actual decoration installation.

Be aware of local or homeowner association regulations and restrictions on holiday decorations. If using a ladder, check the condition of rails, rungs, and brackets before positioning or climbing it. It is better to not use a metal ladder when installing electrical decorations if avoidable. Set ladders so the feet are on a stable, even and clean dry base. Have a spotter, if available, to help steady the ladder, pass materials and tools, and prevent persons from entering the drop zone.

Survey the location where you intend to install decorations to ensure that nails, screws or brackets will not penetrate electrical or other utility lines. Use the proper style and size hanger for the weight of the decoration you intend to mount.



Decorations should never block any means of egress nor access to utility shutoffs, including faucets, outlets, or meters. Be sure your street address numbers are not obscured by decorations, either. If you use an outdoor lighting socket as a power source for holiday

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decorations, make certain the lighting you temporarily disable is not safety-critical.

Young children should be kept out of areas where decorations are being installed; it's very difficult to handle tools and materials properly and safely while keeping an eye on them.

### **Indoor holiday lighting tips:**

- Buy/use only lighting sets and extension cords that bear the *Underwriters' Laboratories (UL)* or *Factory Mutual (FM)* label and are specifically marked for **indoor** use.
- Make certain you take time to unroll/untangle and inspect each set of lights —new or old— for worn insulation, bare/frayed wires, broken or cracked sockets, and loose connections. If you find any such damage, **do not try to repair the set**. Throw it away. Replace broken/damaged lamps/bulbs (*and **unplug the set prior to changing lamps/bulbs!***)



- Be careful not to overload electrical outlets. Always look for the manufacturer's recommendations on the number of light sets that can be strung together and other precautions listed on the packaging for the lights. If no manufacturer's instructions are available, as a general rule, never string more than **three** sets of lights per single extension cord.
- Protect the electrical wires from damage. Don't run lights/wires behind drapes, under carpet, through doorways, or where they will be walked on. Don't use nails or tacks to hang wires. Plastic non-conductive "hangers" are available for various holiday light-set hanging needs.
- Always unplug lights before doing any maintenance work on them.

### **Outdoor lighting considerations:**

- Buy/use only lighting sets and extension cords that bear the *Underwriters' Laboratories (UL)* or *Factory Mutual (FM)* label and are specifically marked for **outdoor** use.
- Always look for the manufacturer's recommendations on the number of lights sets that can be strung together and other precautions listed on the packaging for the lights.
- Check all light sets for fraying, aging, and heat damage. Throw away any sets that show signs of damage.
- Connect sets of lights to an extension cord before plugging the cord into an outlet.
- Always test your light sets before setting up your ladder —replacing broken/burnt-out bulbs is **much** easier on the ground than on a ladder/roof!

- To hold lights in place, string them through hooks or insulated staples; **do not use** nails or tacks. Never pull or tug lights to remove or disconnect them.
- Plug all outdoor electric decorations into circuits with GFI (*ground fault circuit interrupter*) protection to avoid potential shocks.
- If you are using a ladder, avoid contact with overhead power lines when setting up your ladder, stringing lights, or working on the roof.
- Wherever extension cords and light sets are connected together outdoors, keep the connections dry by wrapping them with friction tape or plastic.

### **Tree Safety:**



**Fresh Trees** —When selecting your tree, make sure to shake the tree vigorously, tap it on the ground, and watch for excessive loss of needles. If the tree loses a lot of needles, it's already drying out, and a dry tree significantly increases the risk of the tree catching fire in your home. The trunk butt should be sticky with resin. Fresh trees should be green and the needles should be difficult to pull from the branches. Another good test is to take a single needle and bend it between your fingers. The needle should bend, not break.

- Once you've selected a fresh tree and gotten it home, secure it in a sturdy stand and provide it with adequate water. At holiday time, many stores carry products designed to help you keep track of when your tree needs water. Keeping your tree well-watered will keep it supple so it retains its needles, making for less cleanup after the holidays and a lesser fire danger. Be sure to keep the stand filled with water because both cut and live trees dry out rapidly in heated rooms.
- Use only non-combustible or flame-resistant materials to trim a tree. Choose tinsel or artificial icicles of plastic or nonleaded metals. (*Hopefully you won't even find "leaded" metal products available anywhere! For more information about lead-poisoning, click [here](#) to jump to the CDC's [Lead Poisoning Prevention Program](#) website, which includes lists of current product recalls involving lead.*)
- **Artificial Trees** —If you're considering an artificial tree, the most important thing to look for is the "**Fire Resistant**" label. This means the tree has been treated with a chemical that makes it resist burning — It does not mean the tree can't, or won't, catch on fire. NEVER use electric lights on metallic trees — use spotlights for illumination. The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights, and a person touching a branch could be electrocuted.

**Greens** —Evergreen (*but NEVER cedar*) cuttings may be used in limited quantities, but keep greens away from heat sources (*radiators, air vents, large appliances, light receptacles, etc.*) and don't smoke near trees or greens. To be as safe as possible, greens/cuttings used for door adornment or for corridor/stairwell decorations (*or really for use anywhere other than as*

**Tree Lighting** —Decorate the tree first, and plug in the lights last. *a table centerpiece*) should be flameproofed by flocking or other treatment.

- Try to insure your lamps/bulbs don't touch the tree or other decorations. Take time to unroll/untangle and carefully inspect each set of lights **before** stringing it on the tree. It's easier to find and replace broken and burnt-out bulbs **before** stringing your lights on the tree! (*And if a light set doesn't work at all, better to know so before it's on the tree, too!*)

- Turn off or unplug your indoor holiday lighting whenever the decorated area of the house is unattended —not just when going to bed or leaving the house. Nowadays, relatively cheap wired and wireless "remote control" switches are available to ease this task (*and keep you from having to crawl/bend behind a Christmas tree or furniture to unplug a lighting set/scene.*) Outdoor lighting timers and remote-control sets are also available and should be considered.
- Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens. When using candles for holiday accents, always use non-flammable holders, and place candles where they cannot be overturned.
- In homes with small children, take special care to avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable; keep trimmings with small removable parts out of the reach of children to avoid the child swallowing or inhaling small pieces. Avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food that may tempt a child to eat them.
- Wear gloves to avoid eye and skin irritation while decorating with spun glass "*angel hair.*" Follow container directions carefully to avoid lung irritation while decorating with artificial snow sprays.
- Remove all wrapping papers, bags, paper, ribbons and bows from tree and fireplace areas promptly after gifts are opened. These items can pose suffocation and choking hazards to a small child, or can ignite if near a heat source.

**Live Tree & Greens/Cuttings Removal** — Live trees and greens/cuttings should be removed as soon as practical after the holiday for which they were used.

**Candle Safety Tips:**

- Make sure candles are placed in sturdy, non-combustible holders that will not tip, away from decorations, drapes, and other combustible materials.
- Check your candles frequently to make sure they don't burn down too far or drip hot wax.
- Keep small children away from candles and never leave children unattended in a room with lit candles.
- Keep matches and lighters out of the reach of children.
- Do not use candles to decorate Christmas trees.
- Keep Yule Logs, Menorahs and Kinaras away from drapes, trees or any other potentially flammable objects.
- Extinguish candles and turn off decorative lights before leaving home or going to sleep.
- For holiday decorating, you should purchase/use only materials labeled as noncombustible, flame-resistant, or flame-retardant. Locate all decorations and decorating materials away from heat sources.

- These materials should **never** be used for holiday decorations, under **any** circumstances, because they are **inherently combustible and/or cannot be flameproofed**: bamboo, cedar trees/branches, corn stalks/shucks, cotton or confetti (*loose, in large quantities*), dry moss/leaves, flammable powders/liquids, hay/straw (*loose or baled*), paper streamers (*serpentine*), plastic sheeting/pellets, sawdust, tumbleweeds, wood bark/shavings
- Keep holiday plants such as mistletoe, holly berries, and Christmas cactus away from children and pets.

*Poinsettias* — Previously considered a poisonous plant, recent studies have shown that the poinsettia is nontoxic. Ingestion of small amounts may result in mild gastrointestinal irritation (*upset stomach*) and could make pets very sick.

## Toy Safety

—Select toys to suit the age, abilities, skills and interest level of the intended child. Toys too advanced may pose safety hazards for younger children.

- Tips to help choose appropriate toys for children:
  - **Magnets** — For children under age six, avoid building sets with small magnets. If swallowed, serious injuries and/or death can occur.
  - **Small Parts** — For children younger than age three, avoid toys with small parts, which can cause choking. Look for sturdy construction, such as tightly-secured eyes, noses and other potential small parts.
  - **Ride-on Toys** — Riding toys, skateboards and in-line skates go fast and falls could be deadly. Helmets and safety gear should be sized to fit.
  - **Projectile Toys** — Projectile toys such as air rockets, darts and sling shots are for older children. Improper use of these toys can result in serious eye injuries. For all children under 8, avoid toys that have sharp edges and points.
  - **Chargers and Adapters** — Charging batteries should be supervised by adults. Chargers and adapters can pose thermal burn hazards to children.
- **Be a label reader when shopping for toys!** Look for toy labels that give age and safety recommendations and use that information as a guide. And, before allowing your child to play with a toy that he has received as a gift, read the instructions carefully.
- To prevent both burns and electrical shocks, don't give young children (*under age ten*) a toy that must be plugged into an electrical outlet. Instead, buy toys that are battery-operated. Pay attention to instructions and warnings on battery chargers. Some chargers lack any device to prevent overcharging.
- Children under age three can choke on small parts contained in toys or games. Government regulations specify that toys for children under age three cannot have parts less than 1 1/4 inches in diameter and 2 1/4 inches long.
- Children under age 8 can choke or suffocate on un-inflated or broken balloons. Remove strings and ribbons from toys before giving them to young children.
- Immediately discard plastic wrappings on toys before they become dangerous playthings.
- Watch for pull toys with strings that are more than 12 inches in length. They could be a strangulation hazard for babies.

- Bacteria are often present in raw foods. Fully cook meats and poultry, and thoroughly wash raw vegetables and fruits.
- Wash cutting boards and preparation surfaces between uses, especially after raw meat is handled.
- Be sure to keep hot liquids and foods away from the edges of counters and tables, where they can be easily knocked over by a young child's exploring hands.
- Wash your hands frequently, and make sure your children do the same. To know (*and teach your children*) how long to wash, humming one chorus of "Happy Birthday" gives adequate sanitation in most circumstances.
- Never put a spoon used to taste food back into food without washing it.
- Always keep raw foods and cooked foods separate, and use separate utensils when preparing them.
- Always thaw meat in the refrigerator, never on the countertop.
- Foods that require refrigeration should never be left at room temperature for more than two hours.

### Happy Visiting —

- Clean up immediately after a holiday party. A toddler could rise early and choke on leftover food or come in contact with alcohol or tobacco.
- Remember that the homes you visit may not be childproofed. Keep an eye out for danger spots.
- Keep a laminated list with all the important phone numbers likely to be needed in case of an emergency. Include your pediatrician and the poison control center.
- Ask your neighbor if he has a gun before sending your kids over to play. If the answer is yes, you need to make absolutely sure that all guns are stored unloaded and locked - ideally in a gun safe - with ammunition locked separately. Include the question along with other things you might normally discuss before sending your child to someone's house.
- Traveling, visiting family members, getting presents, shopping, etc., can all increase your child's stress levels. Sticking to your child's usual routines, including sleep schedules and timing of naps, can help you and your child enjoy the holidays and reduce stress.
- Fireplace chimneys should be cleaned annually, preferably by a professional chimney sweep.
- Fireplaces should be equipped with a safety screen or doors, which should be kept closed at all times when the fire is lit.
- Before lighting any fire, check to see that the damper is open. Remove all greens, boughs, papers, and other decorations from the fireplace area.

- Use care with "fire salts," which produce colored flames when thrown on wood fires. They contain heavy metals that can cause intense
- Do not burn wrapping papers in the fireplace. A flash fire may result as wrappings ignite suddenly and burn intensely.



**Have a SAFE and happy holiday Season!**



**Best Wishes from the Office of Emergency Management and Communications!**

