

December 18, 2015

## DOH-DUVAL WANTS YOU TO PREVENT INJURIES, STAY SAFE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Contact:

Charles Griggs

[charles.griggs@flhealth.gov](mailto:charles.griggs@flhealth.gov)

904-253-1004



**Jacksonville, Fla.** — The halls are decked and lights carefully strung, but did you know that could mean possible injuries this holiday season? But there's no need to pack away the decorations just yet, because unintentional injuries are preventable. The Florida Department of Health in Duval County (DOH-Duval) offers tips and guidelines for decorating this winter.

“As families gear up for the holidays, it is important to make safety a priority,” said Director of the Florida Department of Health in Duval County Dr. Kelli Wells. “We encourage you to follow a few simple safety tips for a safe holiday season.”

### **You can prevent injuries and damage to your home with the following tips:**

#### **Prevent a fire**

- Choose decorations that are flame resistant or flame retardant;
- Natural trees look beautiful and smell great, but if they're not watered regularly, the needles can dry out and pose a potential fire hazard. Make sure your tree has plenty of water by checking it regularly;
- Keep trees away from heat sources such as space heaters and fireplaces. Always unplug lights before leaving your home or going to sleep;
- Keep holiday candles at least 12 inches away from anything that can burn, and don't forget to blow them out when you leave the room or before you go to sleep. Never leave a candle burning unattended;
- Always check electrical cords for signs of wear and make sure they are marked “UL,” meaning they have been tested and certified safe. Never overload outlets or extension cords; and
- Test your smoke alarms and make a fire escape plan with all family members, don't forget your pets too.

#### **Prevent carbon monoxide poisoning**

- Never use a gas range or oven to heat a home;
- Do not leave the motor running in a vehicle parked in a partially or fully enclosed space or garage;
- Never run a generator inside your home or any partially or fully enclosed space or garage; and
- Install and check your carbon monoxide alarm batteries regularly.

Many injuries and home fires can occur during the winter season. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), from 2009-2013 fires involving Christmas trees and holiday lights caused \$17.5 million in direct property damage. In 2014, fires resulted in 3,275 civilian fire casualties. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 41% of reported cases of CO exposure occur during the winter. Carbon monoxide poisoning, associated with gas stoves and generators, can also lead to severe illness and death.

“While the holiday season does not mean we are likely to see an increase in home fires, you should still take steps to avoid becoming a holiday fire statistic,” said Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Chief Kurt Wilson. “Don’t let your holiday memories be tarnished by a potentially avoidable tragedy.”

You have the power to keep your holidays injury free. See the NFPA [Public Service Announcement](#) to learn how to safely decorate this year. Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention site on [carbon monoxide poisoning](#) to learn more about prevention and symptoms.

### **About the Florida Department of Health**

The department works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

Follow us on Twitter at [@HealthyFla](#) and on [Facebook](#). For more information about the Florida Department of Health in Duval County please visit <http://www.duval.flhealth.gov>.