

Prevention Pipeline

NC DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE
OSFM INJURY PREVENTION DIVISION
and SAFE KIDS NORTH CAROLINA
888-347-3737 • safekidsnc.org

newsletter

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Mike Causey Insurance Commissioner • State Fire Marshal • Safe Kids NC Chair

THE TREE OF LIFE

Each year, the “Tree of Life” ceremony takes place on the Capitol grounds in Raleigh to commemorate the lives lost on the state’s highways throughout the year. This year, Department of Insurance’s Safe Kids NC placed a plaque at the foot of the tree that has been permanently placed on the grounds this year as a reminder from the agencies involved that their life’s work is to achieve zero roadway deaths.



The North Carolina Department of Transportation’s Governor’s Highway Safety Program (GHSP) began the “Tree of Life” ceremony in December 1997 to honor the victims of roadway deaths across North Carolina. A few years later, Mother’s Against Drunk Driving (MADD) was added as a partner to hold a candlelight vigil to bring awareness of the increased threat that impaired driving poses on our roadways. This year, GHSP and MADD are commemorating what is now the 23rd year of the tradition by planting the permanent tree at the Capitol grounds.

Holding with tradition, this year’s “Tree of Life” is dedicated to the 1,470 people who lost their lives as a result of vehicle crashes on North Carolina roadways in 2019. A white flood light will represent all traffic fatalities and a red flood light will be lit in memory of the 348 people who lost their lives last year as a result of an impaired driver.

This permanent tree, a Yoshino Cryptomeria, has been made possible by the joint efforts of the Department of Insurance, Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, MADD, NC GHSP and hundreds of law enforcement, first responders and volunteers who have made it their life’s work to reach zero roadway deaths.

Due to Covid-19, this year’s virtual tree lighting will be held on Friday, December 4, 2020 beginning at 6 p.m. Click [HERE](#) to register today. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.





SPACE HEATERS ARE THEY SAFE?

Heating equipment is the second leading cause of home fires in the U.S. Portable, electric space heaters can be a convenient source of supplemental heat for your home in cold weather. Unfortunately, they can also pose significant fire and electric shock hazards if not used properly. Fire and electrical hazards are caused when space heaters are used without appropriate safety features, placed near combustibles, or are improperly plugged in. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), half of all home heating fires occur in December, January and February.

Safety should always be a top priority when using space heaters. Here are some tips for keeping your home safe and warm when it's cold outside:

- Establish a 3-foot, kid and pet-free zone around the heater, and never put a space heater in a child's room.
- Remember to turn portable heaters off when leaving the room or going to bed.
- Never plug space heaters into a drop cord or surge protector. Always plug directly into the outlet to prevent an electrical fire.
- For fuel burning space heaters, always use the right kind of fuel specified by the manufacturer.
- Install and maintain carbon monoxide (CO) alarms to avoid the risk of CO poisoning.
- Install working smoke alarms on every level of your home and in every bedroom.
- Test alarms monthly.



BUNDLING UP AND CAR SEATS

As the holiday season approaches, so does colder temperatures. This means families may be traveling more than usual. Parents should remember that even though we bundle up our children to keep them safe from the elements when outside, a bulky winter coat and a car seat can be a dangerous combination.

The Manufacturer's Alliance for Child Passenger Safety (MACPS) states that a harness should not be secured over a bulky coat and best practice is to always first remove the coat, secure the child, and then cover with the coat if needed. Placing a bulky or puffy coat under the car seat harness can leave the harness too loose to be effective in a crash.

As a general rule remember, winter coats should not be worn underneath a car seat harness because that can leave the harness too loose to be effective in a crash.

Here are some quick tips on how to bundle up safely during the colder months:

- For small children, once the child is harnessed in the seat, place a blanket over them to keep them warm.
- Never use anything that hasn't been approved by the manufacturer of your car seat.
- Be sure not to add anything extra behind the harness and always follow the manufacturer instructions.
- For bigger kids, remove the coat before harnessing the child then place the coat around them over the harness.
- One of the most common problems with children in car seats is that the harness is left too loose and wearing a big winter coat can add to this problem.

It's important that the harness is tight enough so that you can't pinch the webbing between your thumb and forefinger. Extra slack in the harness can let the child move to the point where he or she is beyond the protection of the car seat and may cause the child to be ejected during a crash.



DON'T LET YOUR CHRISTMAS TREE GO UP IN FLAMES

According to NFPA, electrical problems are the cause of more than one out of every four homes that have a Christmas tree fire. Although Christmas tree fires are not common, when they do occur, they are more likely to be serious.

When placing a tree in your home to decorate, choose your tree's location carefully. Place the tree away from stairs where a fire can quickly travel to bedrooms. Avoid placing it near heat sources, such as a wood stove or a fireplace. Being close to radiators and heat vents can cause the tree to dry out more quickly as well as placing it too close to a heat source, which can cause a fire in the home. Christmas is one of the most loved holidays of the year, but where you put your tree could pose a real danger to you and your family.

Here are quick tips for proper live Christmas tree use:

- Always choose a **freshly cut Christmas tree** so that it will absorb water and stay fresher longer.
- **Cut 2" from base of the trunk** prior to putting the tree in the stand. Sap flows out of trees, so without a fresh cut at the bottom, the water absorption is decreased.
- **Shake the tree** to remove residual debris before bringing it into the home.
- **Avoid direct sunlight** on a live tree. This could cause the tree to dry out making it easier to catch fire.
- **Water your tree daily.** Constant watering helps to keep trees fresher longer. If you notice tree needles on the floor, it's a sign that the tree may be drying out and needs to be watered.
- Use **approved lights** and connect them properly. Choose lights tested by a nationally recognized testing laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL). Avoid connecting multiple extension cords and more than three strands of lights. Unplug before bedtime.
- **Inspect lights and decorations.** Before decorating your tree, lay out strings of lights and look for any broken or missing lights. Needles can get stuck in empty light sockets, creating a potential fire hazard. Electric energy passes through the bulb sockets and can cause needles to ignite.
- **Toss damaged lights and decorations.** Don't attempt to repair light strings if they are worn, frayed or show other problems. Always purchase new lights if there is damage.
- **Avoid using candles near the tree.** In a quarter of Christmas tree fires measured by the NFPA, a candle or other heat source was too close to the tree.
- **Avoid combustible ornaments.** Pinecones and other ornaments can add fuel to a Christmas tree fire and should be avoided.
- **Keep pets safe.** Pets can chew, paw and otherwise damage lights and potentially knock over the tree.
- **Unplug at night.** Never leave the tree plugged in when you are away from home or asleep. This is important for a live or artificial tree.
- **Close bedrooms doors.** Closing your bedroom doors at night can keep out harmful smoke and flames in the event of a Christmas tree fire, giving you more time to escape.
- **Test smoke alarms.** Make sure smoke alarms are properly located and in working order.

Staying aware, as well as taking these precautions to help make your home safer over the holidays, can help you enjoy your Christmas tree and help keep your loved ones safe

TOYS ARE FUN... BUT NOT ALWAYS SAFE

As Christmas approaches, parents' attention is turned to the newest toy trends on the market. While most toys on the market have passed strict U.S. safety standards, there are still ways that purchases can be made for items that are risky to children and even adults. It is important to understand how to properly choose toys based on a child's age and development, and to know where the item will be produced. Many countries still produce products with unsafe chemicals or unsafe production methods.

Here are a few key things to remember:

- Avoid toys with **ribbons and strings**. Choking or suffocation injuries occur when children that are too young for the toy, wrap the ribbon or string around their necks or chew on these items during play.
- Toys that are **magnetic** are very popular with all children. However, magnets are very dangerous if ingested. If more than one magnet is swallowed, it can cause tears in the intestinal wall or cause a blockage. Keep magnetic toys away from children that like to chew on things. Inspect these toys often to prevent accidental ingestion or other injury.
- Like magnets, **disk batteries** are a potential swallowing threat. These can burn holes in the lungs or stomach if ingested. Keep toys that use these batteries away from small children. Inspect them often to prevent accidental release from the toy.
- Toys with **sharp points or edges** can get sharper over time. Inspect all toys to reduce the risk of injury to your child.
- Toys with **small parts** cause a risk of choking. If a toy (or toy accessory) can fit into a toilet paper tube, they are too small for use by small children.
- Check all **noise making** toys for noise level. Higher noise levels pose a risk to children's hearing.
- **Riding or jumping** toys are for older children. Follow the manufacturer's instructions when making these purchases. Even toys, such as trampolines or 4-wheelers that are given to the appropriate aged child, should still be used under supervision to help prevent the risk of injury.
- Toys painted with **lead-based paint** are banned for sale in the United States. However, with the worldwide internet, these toys make their way into the U.S. often. Be aware of what you purchase online. Do not buy an item that could be painted with lead-based paint. Ingestion of this type paint is known to cause lead poisoning and can lead to life-long medical issues.

Taking the proper precautions when you make your toy purchases can ensure a safer holiday season. The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is a great resource to help make appropriate choices for your family!



CPS TECHNICIAN CERTIFICATION CLASSES

MARCH 1 – 4	Raeford, NC
MARCH 15 – 18	Kenansville, NC
APRIL 6 – 9	Rockingham, NC
APRIL 13 – 16	Wilmington, NC
APRIL 27 – 30	West Jefferson, NC
MAY 3 – 6	Selma, NC

For more information on how to register for a class, visit www.buckleupnc.org.

WEBSITE OF THE MONTH

www.cpsc.gov/safety-education

The Consumer Product Safety Commission works very hard to protect the citizens of the United States. Their **Toy Recall Statistics Information Center** website is a great resource for product safety information and recalls on products sold in the United States.

