Tips on How to Have a Fun and Safe Holiday Season

**PRESENTS AND TOYS**

- Buy age appropriate toys for children. Toys with small parts are dangerous for children under three years of age. Small parts can cause a child to choke if swallowed. If an object can fit inside a toilet paper roll, it is too small for a child under three years of age. Follow age recommendations and safety warnings for all children’s toys.

- Balloons are not appropriate toys for small children. Children should be supervised when in a room with decorative balloons. Balloons that are not blown up should be kept out of reach of children. Pieces of broken balloon should be cleaned up immediately as they can suffocate a child if swallowed.

- Throw away or recycle all packaging such as plastic, cellophane, styrofoam and wrapping paper as soon as gifts have been unwrapped. These items can suffocate a young child.

- Children will be interested in gifts that are not intended for them. Put away adult gifts that could be hazardous to a child such as perfumes, alcohol, appliances and power tools.

The holiday season is a time spent with friends and family, a time of games, parties, shopping, cooking, eating, outdoor fun and more! As exciting as many of the activities are, they may also present distracting and stressful situations where simple safety is forgotten. Follow the tips below to have a safe and enjoyable holiday season.

**D ID Y OU K NOW?**

On December 14, 2010, the Government of Canada passed the *Canada Consumer Product Safety Act (CCPSA)*. The CCPSA is legislation that will help ensure the health and safety of Canadian families from consumer products that are dangerous, defective or have been involved in serious incidents. For more information on the CCPSA, please visit Health Canada at www.hc-sc.gc.ca or call toll free at 1-866-662-0666.
seasonal safety ...
Tips on how to have a fun and safe holiday season (continued)

**FIRE SAFETY**
- Examine Christmas lights each year. Discard strings of lights that are worn out and replace all lights that do not work. Use only ‘Outdoor’ lights for the exterior of your home. Turn off all Christmas lights when you go to bed or leave the house.
- Keep space heaters at least one metre away from materials and objects that can burn (furniture, blankets, Christmas tree).
- Keep an all-purpose fire extinguisher near the exits in your home and at the entrance to your kitchen.
- Place carbon monoxide detectors in your home near sleeping areas. Household appliances such as stoves, furnaces and fireplaces can release carbon monoxide if they are not working properly. Carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless, tasteless gas that can be fatal to you and your family.
- Check smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors monthly to ensure they are working. Replace batteries every 6 months.
- When cooking on the stovetop, remain in the kitchen at all times. Turn pot handles to the middle of the stove so a child cannot grab a handle and pull a pot down from the stovetop.

**CHRISTMAS TREE**
- When enjoying a real tree in your home follow the tips below:
  - Keep the tree well-watered at all times.
  - Use a sturdy, broad-based stand.
  - Do not place the tree near floor heaters, fireplaces, woodstoves or other heat sources.
  - Never decorate a tree with candles.

**DECORATIONS**
- Put small tree ornaments and tinsel near the top of your Christmas tree where a young child cannot reach them.
- Angel hair is made out of fiberglass. Keep angel hair out of reach of children.
- Use Canadian Standard Association (CSA) approved electric lights.
- Use insulated staples, not nails or tacks to put up lights.
- Do not overload electrical outlets; check all cords, sockets and plugs for wear.
- Keep electrical outlets covered with child safety covers and keep excess cords out of reach of children.
- Be aware of traditional holiday plants which may be dangerous to your child. For example Poinsettias are poisonous if eaten by a child.

**ENTERTAINMENT**
- Holiday candy and nuts can cause children under the age of three to choke. Keep these food items out of reach of children.
- Always clean up immediately after a holiday party in your home. A child could wake up early and choke on leftover food or consume alcohol or tobacco that was left out and become severely poisoned.
- Discuss the safety rules in your home with babysitters and other alternative caregivers.
safe travel ... during the winter season

Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of injury-related death for children and youth. Remember to leave your home early if you are travelling, listen to weather and highway reports and drive for the conditions. The Saskatchewan Highway Hotline provides up-to-date road information across the province and can be reached toll free at 1-888-335-7623.

Do not drive under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Keep a winter roadside emergency safety kit in your car in case you meet blizzard conditions while travelling. If road conditions worsen once you are on the highway, stop at the next available rest area or town and wait until it is safe to drive. For information on what to include in a safety kit and what to do in the event of a blizzard visit SGI at http://wwwsgi.sk.ca/sgi_pub/road_safety/drive_right/poor03.html.

To keep your children safe ensure they are properly restrained in an appropriate child passenger restraint for their age and physical size (rear-facing car seat, forward-facing car seat, booster seat or seat belt).

Remember, arriving at a family event or party late is better than not arriving at all due to a crash.

cold weather ... and car seats

Cold temperatures are a reality of living in Saskatchewan. A very common error in winter time is the over dressing of children when they are in car seats. A simple rule of thumb is that a child should wear the same clothes in a car seat that they would wear in the house. This means no bulky sweaters, snowsuits, and jackets. Car seats are regulated by a standard that allows only a certain amount of compressibility in the material in the car seat (i.e., foam, padding). In a collision, any additional material or padding such as a snowsuit or jacket, can compress to the point that the harness system becomes very loose and no longer properly restrains the child.

Another popular winter car seat product for infant seats is the bundle or bunting bags. These bags have slots or openings in the back that the car seat harness system must be routed through. They are meant to stay in the car seat; if the child is placed in the seat and then the bundle or bunting bag zips up around the child much like a sleeping bag. Bundle or bunting bags are a potential risk because they add compressible padding between the child and car seat and often affect the fit of the harness system on the child. These two factors can create slack in the harness in the event of a sudden stop or crash. Bundle or bunting bags can also cause children to overheat while travelling in a vehicle. Overheating increases a child’s risk of Sudden-Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

How Do I Keep my Child Warm in the Winter When Travelling?

- Have your vehicle warmed up to a comfortable room temperature and simply take off any jackets or snowsuits before placing your children in a car seat.
- Properly secure your child in the car seat in the clothes they would normally wear indoors.
- Use blankets and place them over top of your child, tucking them around the sides of your baby. Blankets are great because they can be added or taken off to adjust temperature.
- You can use an elastic style cover for your car seat that goes around the shell but does not go behind the child, or affect the harness system in any way.

Remember:

- Avoid using aftermarket products such as bundle bags, mirrors, toys and mobiles, harness strap covers, or head huggers. Products purchased separate from your seat that do not come from the same manufacturer can potentially be dangerous to use.
- Ensure the chest clip is at armpit level, and that the harness system is snug (only able to fit one index finger between the harness and the child’s collar bone).
- Always follow the manufacturer’s instruction manual for your car seat and your vehicle.

For more information on holiday or home safety and child passenger safety please visit the Saskatchewan Prevention Institute at http://www.preventioninstitute.sk.ca.

Information was adapted from Health Canada, Safe Kids Canada, and SGI.