



The Safety Corner

From the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned

November 15, 2007



Holiday Safety

This issue of the Safety Corner highlights safe practices over the holiday season.

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From the Director: November marks the beginning of the holiday season, typically from Thanksgiving through New Years day. The holidays are a time when everyone enjoys spending time with family and friends. It is also a time when many of us decorate our homes to usher in the holiday spirit. Unfortunately, it is also a time where improper placement of decorations could place your family at a higher risk of an accident.

As the holidays approach, I urge you to look for and eliminate potential dangers from holiday lights and decorations that could lead to fires and injuries. Christmas trees are involved in numerous house fires annually, resulting in deaths, injuries and property loss and damage.

According to the U.S. Fire Administration, fires occurring during the holiday season injure 2,600 individuals and cause over \$930 million in damage every year. Take holiday and winter safety tips seriously and don't let you or your family become a statistic.

You are encouraged to pass on and post this Safety Corner for the widest dissemination. Log on to www.mccll.usmc.mil to download previous editions of the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL) Safety Corner as well as our Monthly Newsletters. I look forward to getting your comments and feedback so we can raise awareness, reduce risk and maintain a high level of readiness. On behalf of the MCCLL staff, have a safe and enjoyable holiday season.

Semper Fidelis,
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How Fires Start

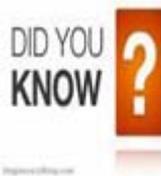
-  **FUEL** - Fuel can be any combustible material - solid, liquid or gas. Most solids and liquids become a vapor or gas before they will burn.
-  **OXYGEN** - The air we breathe is about 21 percent oxygen. Fire only needs an atmosphere with at least 16 percent oxygen.
-  **HEAT** - Heat is the energy necessary to increase the temperature of the fuel to a point where sufficient vapors are given off for ignition to occur.

Lights

- Indoors or outdoors, use only lights that have been tested for safety by a recognized testing laboratory.
- Check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections, and discard damaged sets.
- Use no more than three standard-size sets of lights per single extension cord.
- Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights, and a person touching a branch could be electrocuted.
- Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, house walls, or other firm supports to protect the lights from wind damage. Use only insulated staples to hold strings in place (not nails or tacks), or run strings of lights through hooks.
- Turn off all lights when you go to bed or leave the house. If left on lights can short out and start a fire.
- For added electric shock protection, plug outdoor electric lights and decorations into circuits protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs).

Did You Know

There were 106 firefighters killed while on duty last year.
 Fires killed more Americans than all natural disasters combined.
 81 percent of all civilian fire deaths occurred in residences.
 1.6 million fires were reported. Many others went unreported, causing additional injuries and property loss.





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Decorations Safety Tips



- Use only non-combustible or flame-resistant materials to trim a tree. Choose tinsel or artificial icicles of plastic or nonleaded metals. Leaded materials are hazardous if ingested by children.
- Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens. Always use nonflammable holders, and place candles where they will not be knocked over.
- 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.

Safety tips

Decorating, both indoor and outdoor, can be exciting. Here are some tips that can make your holiday event-free:

- Ensure your family and people staying for the holidays know your home fire escape plan.
- Have your chimney or vent for your fireplace or wood-stove cleaned and inspected before use for the season.
- Check all of your smoke alarms.
- Whenever possible, use flame-retardant or flame-resistant decorating materials.
- Never use natural vegetation indoors that is not set in water or soils.
- Watch for overloading of electrical circuits.
- Use listed power distribution blocks or strips with automatic circuit protection when overloaded or overheated.

Christmas Tree Safety Tips

A fire on any day is bad, but a fire on Christmas seems to be the worst. Some 300 Christmas trees caught fire in one recent year, with electrical problems the most common culprit. Here's how to keep your tree green and your presents safe:

- When you buy your tree, have the vendor make a fresh cut an inch from the bottom; this will help the tree drink.
- If you buy your tree early and keep it outside, store it away from wind and sun, and keep the bottom in a bucket of water.
- Make sure your lights are safe. If you need outdoor lights, make sure the ones you buy are meant for outdoor use.
- Make sure your lights carry certification from a testing laboratory.
- Don't use electric lights on a metal tree.
- Discard any strings of lights that are frayed or broken. Christmas lights are cheap.
- Unplug your Christmas tree before you leave or go to bed.
- Don't buy a tree that is dry and dropping needles. To check for freshness, loosely grip the end of a branch and pull your hand over it. Only a few needles should fall off.
- Make sure your tree stand holds plenty of water, and don't let it run out.
- If your tree seems wobbly, center it in the stand and redo the bolts or screws.
- If your tree stand is cheap, buy a larger, stronger one.
- If you buy an artificial tree, make sure it is fire-retardant.
- Keep your tree at least three feet from furnaces, radiators and fireplaces. Try to position it near an outlet so that cords are not running long distances.
- Do not place the tree where it may block exits.
- When Christmas is over or when the tree starts to drop needles, dispose of it. Don't leave it in your house or put it in your garage.
- Keep a close eye on small children when they are around the tree; many small decorations and ornaments are sharp, breakable and can be swallowed.



Candles

Whether for tradition or decoration, candles need special care when used:

- Do not place candles on or near any decorative vegetation or trees.
- Always use candles in holders that are sturdy and adequately collect dripping wax.

Fireplace Safety

- Have chimneys inspected & cleaned
- Always use a fireplace screen or doors
- Don't burn paper or pine boughs (burning cinders float in the air)
- Don't use flammable liquids (use starter logs)
- Remove stockings or mantle decorations that may catch fire
- Have a fire extinguisher or water available
- Make sure the coals are completely out when you go to bed





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"The more Marines I have around the better I like it!"
General Mark Clark
U.S. Army

Navy and Marine Corps Non-Battle Fatalities

Month: Oct 07, Nov 07, Dec 07, Jan 08, Feb 08, Mar 08, Apr 08, May 08, Jun 08, Jul 08, Aug 08, Sep 08

↑ Marine Corps
+1

↑ Navy
+4



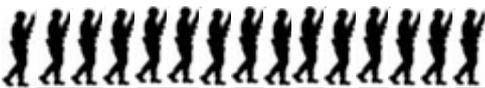
Total Fatalities same period FY07
15

Total Fatalities as of 15 Nov 07
16

Total Fatalities same period FY07
8

Total Fatalities as of 15 Nov 07
12

Marine Totals



Navy Totals

