



SAFETY TIPS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

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Nov. 5, 2010

Montgomery County, Virginia – Montgomery County Emergency Services reminds citizens to keep safety a priority during the holidays. Below are tips to help us have an emergency-free season!

Fire Safety

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) United States Fire Administration (USFA) produced a special report that outlined the characteristics of Thanksgiving Day fires in residential settings. They found:

- an estimated 2,000 Thanksgiving Day fires in residential buildings occur annually in the United States, resulting in an estimated five deaths, 25 injuries and \$21 million in property loss;
- the leading cause of all Thanksgiving Day fires in residential buildings is, by far, cooking; and
- smoke alarms were not present in 20 percent of all non-confined Thanksgiving Day fires that occurred in occupied residential buildings.

To view the full report, go to www.usfa.fema.gov/statistics/.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), leaving cooking unattended is the culprit for the most holiday fires. The American Red Cross recommends the following tips to prevent fires:

- stay in the kitchen while you are cooking;
- keep anything that can catch fire – such as potholders, wooden utensils, food wrappers, towels or curtains – away from your stovetop;
- make sure your sleeves are out of the way when cooking;
- check your food regularly if you are simmering, baking, roasting or boiling – do not leave home while food is cooking and use a timer to remind you to check your food;
- have a “kid-free zone” of at least three feet around the stove and areas where hot food or drink is prepared or carried; and
- make sure your smoke alarms are working.

The NFPA advises all to cook with caution. Always have a lid nearby in case a small grease fire happens. If it does, smother the fire by sliding the lid over the pan and turning off the stovetop. Do not remove the lid until the pan is completely cooled. For an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the oven door closed. Always have a fire extinguisher on hand. If a larger fire occurs, be sure others are getting out and that you have a clear escape route before using the fire extinguisher. When in doubt, just get out! When you leave, close the door behind you to help contain the fire. Call 911 or the local emergency number after you leave.

If you're in need of a smoke alarm, please call your local fire department. They will provide one for you. Prevention is the key to fire safety.

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Transportation Safety

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) alerts holiday travelers to some helpful hints. If you are planning on boarding a plane this holiday season, please keep in mind the 3-1-1 rule:

- 3.4 ounce (100ml) bottle or less for all liquids, gels and aerosols; placed in a
- 1 quart-sized clear, plastic, zip-top bag to hold all small bottles; and
- 1 bag per passenger placed in a screening bin.

Larger quantities of breast milk/baby formula and medically necessary liquids are permitted but must be presented to an officer for further inspection.

For more information on holiday airline travel, go to www.tsa.gov/travelers/holiday_travel.shtm.

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) encourages motorists to follow these simple safety rules, especially during the holiday season:

- buckle up;
- share the road;
- drive alcohol and drug free;
- pay attention in work zones;
- obey the speed limit; and
- avoid distractions.

For real-time traffic updates and information, dial 511 or visit www.511Virginia.org.

Pet Safety

The American Society for the prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) advises pet owners to follow these tips to ensure they – and their furry friends – have a safe holiday:

- if you decide to give your pet a nibble of turkey, make sure it's boneless and well-cooked (to avoid salmonella);
- some herbs contain essential oils and resins that are harmful to your pet, so if something is seasoned, avoid feeding it to your animal;
- do not give your pet raw bread or cake dough – the bread dough rises and expands in their stomach causing pain, bloating, vomiting and a potential fatal risk, the cake dough may contain raw eggs and a risk for salmonella; and
- do not overfeed your pet – a small taste of food is okay, but an overindulgence can lead to an upset stomach, diarrhea or even an inflammatory condition of the pancreas known as pancreatitis.

Stay safe this holiday season, Montgomery County! For more information on the Emergency Services department, visit www.MontgomeryCountyVA.gov/emergency.

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