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Keep Your Holidays Happy: Safety Tips

Admiral Security would like to wish all of our clients, employees, and friends the very best as we begin a New Year. Most importantly, we want to make sure you stay safe and healthy, so we've put together these safety tips covering everything from home decorating to holiday meal preparation. Be safe, and have a Happy Holiday Season!



Holiday Road Trip?

Many of us consider the holidays a time to catch up with family and friends that we haven't seen in a while. Be sure that you travel smart to arrive at the celebrations safe and sound. Below are some tips offered by the Oklahoma Highway Patrol.

- Inform a family member where you will be and when to expect you back; give them your route.
- Select well-traveled and lighted thoroughfares. Remember that routes which are congested during rush hour may be very lightly traveled at other hours.
- Use freeways and arterial streets and avoid less-traveled roads, especially when driving at night.
- Keep doors locked and windows rolled up at all times.
- Obtain a map or download the latest GPS data.
- Check for construction detours.
- For longer trips, get a weather forecast.
- Visit the Federal Highway Administration's webpage to find state links for traffic and road closure information at: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/trafficinfo/index.htm>
- Maintain at least half a tank of fuel.
- Have your vehicle serviced and checked out sufficiently far ahead to allow for repairs. Check your spare tire and all fluid levels along with other preventive maintenance



'Tis the Season, to be... Conned?

Ah, the holidays: a time of goodwill toward your fellow man -- or, for some, an opportunity to grab all they can and get away while people's defenses are down! Don't get taken by these popular gimmicks, provided by www.investigationdiscovery.com

Dangerous Downloads. While holiday programs are fun and entertaining, clicking on malicious links can infect you with a worm, Trojan, or virus and ruin your operating system. Signs of trouble: Any spelling errors or an e-card without your name on it. Check the URL of any link contained in the e-card and only click on sites you trust.

Gift Card Duds. Bogus gift cards are often sold over the Internet. Scammers simply sell their cards at online auctions for less than the stated value of the card. But when the card arrives in the mail, the purchaser soon realizes it has no value. Better to buy direct.

The "IT" Gift. Sold out in stores, you find this year's fad online. You order it, but it never arrives. To avoid gift scams, only shop at retailers you know and trust, go directly to their Web sites rather than responding to an email or pop-up, and use credit rather than debit for protection.

Holiday Hackers. According to the DOJ, there has been a dramatic increase in holiday-themed hacking, with nearly 5% of recipients responding to the cyber-thieves. To protect yourself, never respond to emails asking for your financial info.

Fake Charities. Do you know exactly who you are donating to? The past few years have seen a rise in the number of fake charities, but once they receive their contributions, they disappear quickly. To avoid being taken, only give to reputable charities and always go directly to their Web site to make the donation. If you do give in person, never give cash and be sure the charity is tax exempt.

Help Wanted. A typical bogus job ad offers quick cash but very little info. A job-seeker is sent a check with instructions to wire transfer a portion of the money to someone and keep the rest... only the check is not valid. If it sounds too good to be true, it is.

Lecherous Lenders. Those who need cash fast may get taken by the advance fee loan. Borrowers must pay a fee up-front and once they pay up, the "lender" simply disappears. To avoid falling for a bogus loan or credit deal, be suspicious of any offer of credit without a credit check and keep in mind that a legitimate lender's fees will be made clear in writing.



Keep an Eye on the Kids!

The holidays are an exciting time of year for kids, and to help ensure they have a safe holiday season, here are some tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

Trees

- Purchasing an artificial tree? Look for the label “Fire Resistant.”
- When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness. A fresh tree is green, needles are hard to pull from branches and when bent between your fingers, needles do not break. The trunk butt is sticky with resin, and when tapped on the ground, the tree should not lose many needles.
- Cut a few inches off the trunk of your tree to expose the fresh wood. This allows for better water absorption and will help keep your tree from drying out and becoming a fire hazard. Be sure to keep the stand filled with water, because heated rooms can dry live trees out rapidly.
- When setting up a tree at home, place it away from fireplaces, radiators or portable heaters.

Lights and Decorations

- Check all tree lights — even if you've just purchased them — before hanging them on your tree.
- Ensure all bulbs work and that there are no frayed wires, broken sockets or loose connections.
- Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. A person touching a branch could be electrocuted.
- Before using lights outdoors, check labels to be sure they have been certified for outdoor use. Plug all outdoor decorations into circuits with grounded circuit interrupters to avoid shocks.
- To hold lights in place, string them through hooks or insulated staples, not nails or tacks.
- Never pull or tug lights to remove them.
- Turn off all lights when you go to bed or leave the house. They could short out and start a fire.
- Use only non-combustible or flame-resistant materials to trim a tree. Choose tinsel or artificial icicles of plastic or nonleaded metals. Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens. Always use non-flammable 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 prevent them from swallowing or inhaling small pieces.
- Avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food that may tempt a young child to eat them.
- Wear gloves to avoid eye and skin irritation while decorating with spun glass “angel hair.” Follow container directions to avoid lung irritation when decorating with snow sprays.
- Remove wrapping, bags, paper, ribbons and bows from tree and fireplace areas after gifts are opened. These items can pose suffocation and choking hazards to a small child or can cause a fire if near flame.

Toy Safety

- Select toys to suit the age, abilities, skills and interest level of the intended child. Toys too advanced may pose hazards for younger children.
- Government regulations specify that toys for children under age 3 cannot have parts less than 1 1/4 inches in diameter and 2 1/4 inches long.
- Children can have serious stomach and intestinal problems — including death — after swallowing button batteries and magnets. Keep them away from young children and call your health care provider immediately if your child swallows one.
- Children under age 8 can choke or suffocate on uninflated or broken balloons. Remove strings and ribbons from toys before giving them to young children. Watch for pull toys with strings that are more than 12 inches in length. They could be a strangulation hazard for babies.
- Before buying a toy or allowing your child to play with a toy that he has received as a gift, read the instructions carefully.
- To prevent both burns and electrical shocks, don't give young children (under age 10) a toy that must be plugged into an electrical outlet. Instead, buy toys that are battery-operated.

