

Happy — and Safe — Holidays

The fall and winter holidays are just around the corner. Families will reunite and make wonderful memories while trick-or-treating or enjoying festive meals. But the season can also pose potential safety hazards for young children. Luckily, most of these hazards can be easily avoided. Whether children are donning costumes, feasting on turkey, trimming the Christmas tree or lighting the Menorah, the Window Covering Safety Council recommends following these safety guidelines to help keep the holidays safe and fun for the whole family.

Halloween

- Help children pick out or make a costume that will be safe. Make sure it is fireproof and that the eyeholes are large enough for peripheral vision.
- Make sure that if your child is carrying a prop, such as a sword or pitchfork, the tips are smooth and flexible enough to avoid injury.
- Instead of carving, consider drawing a face on a pumpkin. That way, children of all ages can be involved without risk of injury.
- Teaching children basic everyday safety —such as not getting into cars with or talking to strangers, looking both ways before crossing streets and crossing when the lights tell you to —will make trick-or-treating a safer experience.

Thanksgiving

- Keep the kitchen off-limits to young children to lessen the possibility of kitchen mishaps. While cooking, keep pot handles inward to prevent them from lying over the edge of the stove. A fire extinguisher should always be kept in the kitchen.
- Keep Thanksgiving decorations away from any heat source such as an oven or fireplace.
- Make sure guest rooms are safe by testing all smoke detectors, covering all electrical outlets and moving all cribs, beds and furniture away from windows and window cords.
- If your guests include infants and young children, install cordless window coverings or retrofit window coverings manufactured before 2001 in all bedrooms and play areas. Free retrofit kits are available from the Window Covering Safety Council at www.windowcoverings.org or by calling 1-800-506-4636.

Christmas and Hanukkah

- Consider using an artificial tree, as they are cleaner and safer. If using a real tree, it should not lose its green needles when shaken.
- Secure the tree with wire to keep it from tipping and keep the tree away from sources of heat to prevent fire.
- Use only UL listed lights with no more than 3 strands linked together. It is helpful to use miniature lights, which have cool burning bulbs, to prevent injury.
- Turn off Christmas lights while sleeping or when leaving the house for a long period of time.

- Use only outdoor lights outside your home and examine light strings each year. Make sure to throw away worn ones to prevent injury and fire.
- If you have guests visiting for the holidays, make sure to follow the same steps you would during the Thanksgiving season to ensure the safety of children and infants. These include: moving all cribs, beds and furniture away from windows and window cords and installing cordless window coverings or retrofitting window coverings manufactured before 2001 in all bedrooms and play areas. Avoid overloading wall outlets and extension cords.
- Unplug the light string before replacing a bulb. Review the original package to verify proper wattage and voltage.
- When using candles, place them a safe distance from combustibles and make sure that the candles have been extinguished before going to bed.
- Make sure to keep your menorah on a high surface, not too close to the edge, and out of the reach of small children.
- If using an electric menorah, keep children away from lit bulbs, electrical sockets and plugs.