

# MAFES Dawg Tracks

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MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™  
MS AGRICULTURAL AND  
FORESTRY EXPERIMENT STATION

*Holiday Safety Tips*

Christmas is a happy and joyful time of the year. It seems to come more often every year, but it is always a great time of the year joining up with family and friends; but never let us fail to remember the reason for this joyous time. Coupled with Jesus' birth and rejoining with family and friends is always more joyful when all is safe and no incidents or accidents occur.

Between 2009-2013, U.S. fire departments responded to an average of 860 home structure fires that began with holiday decorations and an additional 210 homes that began with Christmas.

Following are some tips created by the Electrical Safety Foundation that will make our Holiday more enjoyable and safer by practicing them:

- ✓ **Inspect electrical decorations for damage before each use** – Cracked or damaged sockets, loose wires and loose connections may cause a serious shock or start a fire.
- ✓ **Do not overload electrical outlets** – Overloaded electrical outlets and faulty wires are a common cause of holiday fires. Avoid overloaded outlets and plug only one high wattage appliance into each outlet at a time.
- ✓ **Never connect more than 3 strings of incandescent lights** – More than 3 strings will not only blow a fuse but could also start a fire.
- ✓ **Keep tree fresh by watering it daily** – Dry trees are a serious fire hazard.
- ✓ **Keep combustibles at least 3 feet away from heat sources** – A heat source that was too close to the decorations was a factor in half of home fires that started with decorations (NFPA).
- ✓ **Protect cords from damage** – To avoid a shock or fire hazard cords should never be pinched by furniture, forced into small spaces such as doors or windows, placed under rugs located near heat sources or attached by nails or staples.
- ✓ **Check decorations by certification label** – Decorations not bearing a label from an independent testing laboratory such as Underwriters' Laboratories (UL), Canadian Standards Associations (CSA) or Internek (ETI) have not been tested for safety and could be hazardous.
- ✓ **Stay in the kitchen when something is cooking** – Unattended cooking equipment is the main cause of home cooking fires (NFPA).
- ✓ **Turn off, unplug and extinguish all decorations when going to sleep or leaving the home** – Unattended candles are the cause of 1 in 5 home candle fires. Half of home fire deaths occur between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. (NFPA).
- ✓ **Avoid extension cords of at all possible** – If you just have to use them be sure that they are heavy enough to carry your expected load and are approved by a certified laboratory.

## CHRISTMAS TREES-

- ✓ Purchase green trees- not one that is brown and brittle. Check to see if the needles will bend and not break.
- ✓ Cut off a slice at the bottom so that the tree will soak up the water. Be sure to water it daily.
- ✓ Station or locate your tree away from ignition sources such as space heaters, fireplaces, live candles, etc.
- ✓ Make sure that you have a steady base for tree.
- ✓ If you chose to purchase or own an artificial tree, make sure that is one that has been approved by a certified laboratory, like Underwriters' Laboratories (UL).

## TOYS & ORNAMENTS-

- ✓ Purchase toys that are the right age for your child. Refrain from buying older age toys for younger age children, as they might result in an injury.
- ✓ Toys with sharp edges, points, strings, cords or parts small to be swallowed should not be given to small children.
- ✓ Place older ornaments and decorations with lead paint out of the reach of small children.

## CHRISTMAS SHOPPING TIPS-

Christmas shopping is a special time of the year, so it is prudent to take extra precautions while doing so. Following are some **general tips** that will help to make your shopping safer and more enjoyable:

- Shop during daylight hours- if you have to do night shopping, try to have a friend or buddy with you.
- Dress casually and comfortable- refrain from wearing expensive jewelry and try to avoid using your purse or a wallet. If you have to have the purse or wallet- keep your cards and money in your front pocket.
- Avoid overloading yourself when you are returning to your vehicle- you need clear vision to avoid a trip or fall.
- When returning to your vehicle- be on the lookout for suspicious strangers around your vehicle- if you do- return to the shopping area for security help to walk you back or wait until the strangers leave the area.
- When you arrive at your vehicle- look around for potential thieves- check the vehicles close to yours- "thieves" like vans and SUVs. Assuming everything is fine, deposit your packages in your trunk or the back of an SUV.
- Also, check inside on the front and back floorboards to make sure that a potential thief hasn't made his way inside.
- Have your keys handy- open the door- get in- lock up and "get out of dodge."

## ATM SHOPPING HINTS-

- Use debit or credit cards when at all possible- protect them as you would cash.
- If you have to use an ATM- do so at a well-lit one- know your pin number to reduce the time spent at the machine.
- If there are folks "hanging out" at the facility- leave and find another well-lit one

***BE SAFE~~NOT SORRY***  
***CHECK YOUR AREAS***  
***TWICE-THEN MOVE INTO ACTION!!!***

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MAFES-MSU-EXTENSION (662) 566-2201  
Excerpts: [www.flhsmv.gov](http://www.flhsmv.gov) 11/22/2016  
[www.cchcmd.edu.publicsafety/holidaysafety](http://www.cchcmd.edu.publicsafety/holidaysafety)