

Think safety during Christmas

Lancaster Farming, Saturday, December 12, 1981-B5

YORK — For a merry holiday season, safe from fire, follow these helpful hints from A. Joan Lamberson, Extension home economist from York County.

—Keep Christmas tree base in water and remove the tree from the house when the needles begin

to drop. Do not place tree near stairs, halls or exits as it may block passage during a fire.

—Artificial metal trees present no fire hazard in themselves but they are shock hazards. Avoid attaching electric lights to metal trees — use a spotlight instead.

—Plastic trees should be made of fire-resistant material. Read the labels on boxes that artificial trees are packaged in to make sure you get one that's fire-resistant.

—Consider using natural or non-electric tree decorations such as bows or sparkling ornaments,

fabrics or dough ornaments, old-fashioned cookies, and popcorn and cranberry strings that you and your family can make.

—If you do use lights, check each string for frayed wires, loose connections and broken or cracked sockets. Lights should be securely fastened to the tree and positioned to avoid contact with needles or branches. Never put more than three sets of lights on one extension cord. When buying new lights, look for the U.L. symbol which tells you the product has passed safety standards.

—Check electric candles for frayed wires and cracks. Place candles in windows away from curtains. To turn off, pull the plug instead of unscrewing the bulb. And always disconnect these lights before going to bed or leaving the house.

—When decorating, avoid using wax candles near trees. Use noncombustible materials and keep away from chairs, sofas or people might smoke. Do not use evergreen boughs for decoration for long periods of time.

—Fireplaces are not incinerators for Christmas wrappings or evergreen boughs. Such materials burn rapidly and will throw all sparks and burning

debris. Keep screen in front of the fireplace to prevent sparks from being thrown out.

—If you use outdoor lighting, make sure it's safe in rain or snow. Use only sockets, cords, plugs and bulbs designed for outdoor use. Also drape connections over a wooden spike to keep them above the ground and out of slush. As an added precaution, wrap insulated tape around each connection to keep it watertight.

—When putting up or taking down outdoor holiday decorations, or even when replacing a bulb, unplug the unit first, especially if you are standing on damp ground.

—The holiday season is party time. Use caution when emptying ashtrays. Be sure cigarettes are cold before throwing ashes into the trash. Guests can be careless, too. Watch for dropped cigarettes and matches.

—Woodstoves can be particularly hazardous. Any wood, cloth or paper touching a heating device could ignite. Be especially cautious with small children around stoves. Maintain a watch for sparks when drafts are open.

—Give a smoke detector as a gift to someone you love or ask Santa to bring you one if you don't already have one installed in your home.

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