

Holiday Gift Guide

Be careful with Christmas trees

Fireplaces, stoves and heaters require safety precautions anytime they are in operation, but when a Christmas tree is in the same room, special care is in order.

Dr. James Logue, director of the state Health Department's Division of Environmental Health, says even when freshly cut, a tree is a hazard against an open flame.

"The sap of a pine tree is highly flammable, and as the tree dries out

it becomes even more of a tinder-box. When set up near a fireplace, stove, or kerosene heater, the tree becomes a fuse ready to light."

Logue suggests not putting a tree in the same room with an open flame heat source unless the room is large enough to keep them well apart.

"When buying a tree, make sure it's fresh. To test for freshness, tap the trunk against the ground. If

needles fall off, the tree is too dry.

"After selecting a tree and getting it home, cut about two inches from the bottom of the trunk. Make the cut diagonally, in order to expose more butt service. Then place the tree in a water-filled stand or a bucket of water. Check the water level daily to be sure it's over the base of the trunk," Logue said.

"If the tree will not be set up and decorated right away, keep it outside or in an unheated garage or storage area to keep it fresh longer."

Logue advises the use of non-flammable decorations and a check of the lights for worn or broken insulation. And he says, "Don't overload circuits or leave the lights burning for long periods of time, especially when no one is home or you are retiring for the night."

Dr. Logue says never leave candles burning unattended and keep Christmas plants out of the reach of children.

'RISKO' is unique gift idea

Need a holiday gift idea? How about something that's appropriate for family and friends of any age. It's free, can be used over and over again and fits into Christmas stockings.

This almost-too-good-to-be-true gift is the "RISKO: A Heart Hazard Appraisal" from the American Heart Association, Northeastern Pennsylvania Region.

These days just about everyone is concerned about the risks of heart disease. Many people are modifying their eating habits, exercising regularly, losing weight and have stopped smoking.

The RISKO heart hazard appraisal is an indicator of risk for adults who do not currently show evidence of heart disease. However, if you already have heart disease, it is very important that you continue to work with your doctor in reducing your risk.

RISKO scores are based upon four of the most important modifiable factors which contribute to the development of heart disease. These factors include your weight, blood pressure, blood cholesterol level and the use of tobacco.

The RISKO score you obtain measures your risk of developing heart disease in the next several years, provided that you currently show no evidence of such disease.

The RISKO heart hazard appraisal is not a substitute for a

thorough physical examination and assessment by your physician. Rather, it will help you learn more about your risk of developing heart disease and will indicate ways in which you can reduce this risk.

So do your holiday shopping now! Contact the American Heart Association, Northeastern Pennsylvania Region, 71 North Franklin Street, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18702 or call us at 822-6247 or 454-5251 for your copy of the "RISKO: A Heart Hazard Appraisal".

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