

The ACT Consumer Affairs Bureau has again issued the leaflet "Merry Christmas with Safety".

The Director of the Bureau, Mr Leo Ryan, advised that the leaflet was originally prepared with the assistance of the ACT Electricity Authority. "Merry Christmas with Safety" was published to help inform consumers about the safety of their Christmas purchases, particularly Christmas trees, artificial snow, lights, candles and trimmings.

Copies of the leaflets are available from the Bureau (on the second floor of North Building, London Circuit), from ACTEA offices (in Civic, Woden and Belconnen), and from Public Libraries, ACTION Bus Interchanges, Motor Vehicle Registries and the Department of Territories and Local Government's Information Kiosk in City Walk.

15 December 1983

Merry
Christmas
with
Safety



With compliments of Consumer Affairs Bureau
Department of Territories and Local Government

Trees

A fresh tree will stay green longer and be less of a fire hazard than a dry tree. To check for freshness, remember:

- . A fresh tree is green
- . Needles are hard to pull from branches
- . When bent between your fingers, fresh needles do not break
- . The trunk butt of a fresh tree is sticky with resin
- . When the trunk of a tree is bounced on the ground, a shower of falling needles shows that the tree is too dry

Do not rely only on chemical coatings or sprays to flameproof your tree.

Place the tree carefully, away from radiators and other heat sources. See that it is out of the way of traffic and doesn't block doorways.

Cut about 2 inches off the trunk. Mount the tree in a sturdy, water-holding stand with wide-spread legs. Fasten a large tree to walls or ceiling with thin guy wires. They'll be nearly invisible.

Fill the stand with water. Keep it full of water while the tree is indoors (as you would fresh flowers).

"Snow"

Artificial snow sprays can irritate the lungs if inhaled. To avoid irritation, read container labels; follow directions carefully. Spray with window(s) open.

Lights

Indoors or outside, only use lights that have been tested for safety. Look for an approval number, eg N45732. Follow all instructions carefully. Do not connect lights to the powerpoint until they are fully set up.

Check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, loose connections. Discard damaged sets or repair them before using. Replace broken or burnt out bulbs immediately. In all of the foregoing instances ensure that the power is turned off first, and that the cable has been disconnected from the powerpoint.

Check the labels of outdoor lights (festoon lights) to see that the lights are weatherproof. Don't use indoor lights or vice-versa. Fasten festoon lights securely to trees, house walls or other firm supports to protect from wind damage. By law, festoon lights must be located so that no lamp is within 0.15 m of flammable material or structural metalwork and they must also be at least 2.5 m above the ground or any other place on which a person is likely to stand.

Use no more than two sets of lights per single extension cord.

Turn off all lights on trees and other decorations when you go to bed or leave the house. Lights could short and start a fire.

Never use ordinary electric lights on a metallic tree. Although safe when used according to the manufacturers' directions, metallic trees can become electrical conductors due to faulty lights or cables. Then, any person touching a branch could be electrocuted. To avoid this danger, use coloured spotlights above or beside a tree, never fastened onto it. Alternatively, it is possible to obtain extra low voltage decorative lighting outfits (fed from a transformer or from batteries) and these can be used on metallic trees.

Keep 'bubbling' lights away from children. Such lights are hazardous because their bright colours and bubbling movement can tempt curious children to break the candle-shaped glass, which can cut, and then to drink the liquid, which contains a hazardous chemical.

Candles

Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens.

Always use non-flammable holders.

Keep away from other decorations and wrapping paper.

Place candles where they cannot be knocked down or blown over.

Trimnings

Where possible, use only non-combustible or flame retardant materials.

Choose tinsel or artificial icicles of plastic or non-leaded metals. Keep tinsel clear of tree lights. Leaded materials are hazardous if ingested by children or pets.

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. Pieces could be swallowed or inhaled
- Avoid trimmings that resemble confectionary or food. A child could eat them

Keep trimmings well away from open flames and electrical connections.

Barbecues

Do not light barbecues with flammable liquids.

Keep children at a safe distance.

Choose children's clothing carefully - for instance reports continually occur of cotton T-shirts catching fire at barbecues.

General Rules for Christmas Safety

- . Keep matches, lighters and candles out of the reach of children.
- . Avoid smoking near flammable decorations.
- . Make an emergency plan to use if a fire breaks out anywhere in the house. See that each family member knows what to do.
- . Avoid wearing loose flowing clothes - especially long, open sleeves - near open flames, a candlelit table or a stove.
- . Never burn candles near evergreens on a mantelpiece or table.
- . Plan for safety. Remember, there is no substitute for common sense. Look for and eliminate potential danger spots near candles, fireplaces, trees and/or electrical connections.

The Bureau wishes to thank the ACT Electricity Authority for its assistance in preparing this pamphlet.

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