

Less Is More When Decorating Safely This Holiday Season

(NAPSA)—Most people tend to think big for the holiday season: more decorations hanging throughout the home, more presents stacked beneath the tree, more people gathered indoors, more frantic holiday food preparation—all leading to more opportunities for home injuries, especially if there are young children in the home or visiting. To help keep festive spirits high and mishaps low, pare down your usual home decorating approach this holiday season by featuring *less* rather than *more*.

“This year, before Americans become overwhelmed with holiday spirit and decking the halls, families need to realize that more decorations around the home could lead to more potential home hazards,” says David Oliver, executive director of Lowe’s Home Safety Council. “The ‘less is more’ decorating concept not only looks better visually, but it can also decrease home injury risks.”

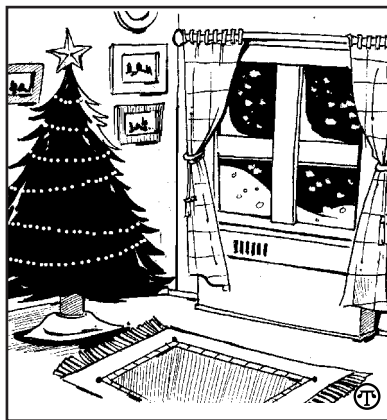
Oliver offers the following home safety lessons to help families trim unsafe decorating clutter along with the tree:

String Three or Fewer Strands

A Lowe’s Home Safety Council survey reveals that 57 percent of people who decorate with lights string more than three strands together. Multiple strands of lights on a tree may be pretty but more than three strands joined together can overheat the wires and extension cords and possibly cause a fire. When hanging lights, check each set, new or old, for broken, unraveled or loose connections, and throw out damaged sets.

Keep Candles to a Minimum

Though lit candles create a nice holiday ambience, having too many flames is flirting with dan-



ger. Keep decorative burning candles to a minimum and keep them away from fans, children, trees and cords to reduce the chances of a possible fire. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) reports that there is twice the number of home candle fires in December than in an average month, and that candles have been responsible for 43 percent of home decoration fires each year.

Turn Out Lights

Be sure to turn off holiday lights before going to sleep at night. Not only are you preventing a possible fire, you could also lessen your energy bill.

Keep Kitchens Safe

Although everyone may offer to help with food preparation and cooking, more people in the kitchen can be hazardous, especially when ovens and stoves are hot. The majority of household injuries, including fires, burns and poisonings, occur in the kitchen. Also, make sure that your home has a working—and properly installed—smoke alarm. About 30 percent of people surveyed claim to have disabled their smoke alarm while cooking.

Use Fewer Figurines and Ornaments

Cluttering your hallways and rooms with too many ornaments can be overwhelming to the eye, not to mention unsafe for small children racing about the house. Eighty-three percent of families with small children decorate with small figurines and miniature ornaments during the holidays, increasing the chances of choking incidents or injuries with fallen or broken objects. Minimize the clutter and danger by making your home’s holiday atmosphere less chaotic and focusing on essential out-of-reach decorative pieces that children won’t easily trip over or choke on.

Don’t Overload Outlets

Many holiday decorations need to be plugged in, but it’s important not to overload outlets. Use surge protectors if multiple outlets are needed, and make sure extension cords are substantial enough to carry the intended load. Generally, the thicker the cord, the greater the load it should be able to carry without overheating, but check the instructions. Make sure the extension cord has been tested by a lab, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL).

Incorporating *less* rather than *more* this holiday season will keep mishaps low and smiles brighter than the twinkle lights on the tree. “No matter which holiday you observe this year, make sure it’s a safe one for you, your family, friends and guests,” says Oliver.

For more information and tips on holiday home safety, visit loweshomesafety.org or call 1-800 SAFE HOME.