



OCA NEWS

IN THE NAME OF THE CHILD

Happy Safe Holiday

By Judge Peggy H. Walker



Finding Joy and Safety this Holiday Season

As the leaves fall and the air chills, we enter the holiday season, a time of not only great traditions and fun but also a time of stress and unexpected hazards. As parents, we become distracted and increase the risk for our children. One Christmas, I was shopping in the mall when a sobbing child grabbed me from

behind. I was startled to find my four-year old granddaughter clinging to me and telling me she was lost. She was shopping with her mother and her aunt. Each thought the other had her. Similarly, at home when we are busy cooking and entertaining, we may not provide the supervision necessary for safety. A good plan is to always

"Holiday" continues on pg 2

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) has issued child safety tips for parents to keep children safer while shopping and traveling.

The NCMEC urges parents to talk with children about safety before heading out to a busy shopping mall or boarding a plane, train, or bus this holiday season.

**ALL OF US HERE AT OCA
WISH ALL OF YOU A HAPPY
AND SAFE THANKSGIVING,
HANUKKAH AND HOLIDAY
SEASON!**



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"Holiday" (continued from pg 1)

designate an adult to focus on the children so there are no assumptions about supervision or safety whether you are shopping, cooking or just visiting others.

Think about the additional hazards of the holidays. Hard candy and candy canes

are lovely decorations but big choking hazards. Scissors are needed for gift wrapping but must be placed out of reach.

"A good plan is to always designate an adult to focus on the children so there are no assumptions about supervision or safety..."

Christmas trees are beautiful and must be touched by every child,

cat and dog that upon occasion knocks them down. We actually put the Christmas tree in the play pen one year to keep our curious toddler safe. Christmas ornaments and holiday lights look like candy. Infants and

toddlers are naturally curious, love to put everything in their mouths, and are very much at

"Holiday" continues on pg 3

Always

- Keep children with you at all times while shopping.
- Accompany and supervise children in public facilities, including restrooms.
- Have a plan in case you become separated, including a pre-designated spot to meet.
- Teach children to look for people who can help, such as a uniformed security officer, salesperson or mother with children.
- Remind children to remain in the area where they become separated.
- Turn shopping trips into opportunities to practice safe shopping skills.

Never

- Dress children in clothing that displays their first or last names, prompting unwelcome attention from people looking for an opportunity to start a conversation with your child.
- Leave children in toy stores or public facilities expecting supervision from store personnel.
- Go shopping or attend a public event with a child if you feel you're going to be distracted. Make other arrangements for childcare ahead of time.
- Allow younger children to shop on their own to purchase surprise gifts for friends or family members.
- Drop off older children at a mall or public place without agreeing on a clear plan for picking them up, including: where, what time, and what to do in case of a change in plans.



“Holiday” (continued from pg 2)
risk around Christmas ornaments and lights. Many of the household plants used to decorate for the holidays are poisonous and must be kept from children and pets.

Remember that as we consume holiday spirits (alcohol), glasses cannot be left within reach of children who are attracted to them. Other common hazards include hot pans of boiling foods, cooking utensils, fireplaces, candles and stressed pets that get irritable with so much commotion in the house. Be careful of clutter which creates stumbling hazards for children, elders, and adults in a hurry but not necessarily cautious as to where they step.

No one expects perfection. Strive to do enough to enjoy but not so much that you put yourself or your children at risk. Slow down. Take a deep breath. Relax and play. Your children will be adults tomorrow or at least it seems that way.

This is a personal message from Douglas County Juvenile Court Judge Peggy H. Walker, who will be sworn in as the next president of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges at the annual meeting in Chicago, Ill. July 2014.

Tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics

Decorations

- Use only non-combustible or flame-resistant materials to trim a tree. Choose tinsel or artificial icicles of plastic or nonleaded metals.
- Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens. Always use non-flammable holders, and place candles where they will not be knocked over.
- 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 to prevent them from swallowing or inhaling small pieces. Avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food that may tempt a young child to eat them.
- Wear gloves to avoid eye and skin irritation while decorating with spun glass "angel hair." Follow container directions carefully to avoid lung irritation while decorating with artificial snow sprays.
- Remove all wrapping papers, bags, paper, ribbons and bows from tree and fireplace areas after gifts are opened. These items can pose suffocation and choking hazards to a small child or can cause a fire if near flame.

Toy Safety

- Select toys to suit the age, abilities, skills and interest level of the intended child. Toys too advanced may pose safety hazards for younger children.
- Before buying a toy or allowing your child to play with a toy that he has received as a gift, read the instructions carefully.
- To prevent both burns and electrical shocks, don't give young children (under age 10) a toy that must be plugged into an electrical outlet. Instead, buy toys that are battery-operated.
- Young children can choke on small parts contained in toys or games. Government regulations specify that toys for children under age three cannot have parts less than 1 1/4 inches in diameter and 2 1/4 inches long.
- Children can have serious stomach and intestinal problems – including death -- after swallowing button batteries and magnets. In addition to toys, button batteries are often found in musical greeting cards, remote controls, hearing aids and other small electronics. Keep them away from young children and call your health care provider immediately if your child swallows one.
- Children can choke or suffocate on un-inflated or broken balloons; do not allow children under age 8 to play with them.
- Remove strings and ribbons from toys before giving them to young children.
- Watch for pull toys with strings that are more than 12 inches in length. They could be a strangulation hazard for babies.
- Parents should store toys in a designated location, such as on a shelf or in a toy chest, and keep older kids' toys away from young children.