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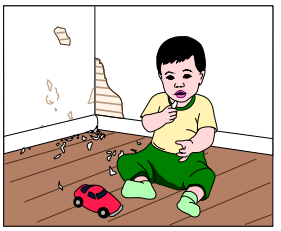
TULANE UNIVERSITY OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY NEWSLETTER

# SAFETY WAVE

## Toy Safety - Tips From Santa

***Reporter- North Pole News:*** **What's the matter Santa? You don't seem to be your jolly old self.**



***Santa*:** I'm not. I am having the hardest time filling the toy wish lists this year, with all of the toy recalls and toy safety concerns. I had to admonish some of my elf staff for almost using lead-based paint on the toys they made. Seems they imported the paint without checking the Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS). Good thing I have a policy of always checking things twice. If my elves can't meet my safety standards, they might as well move to the South Pole.

***Reporter- North Pole News*:** **What should parents know about toy safety?**

***Santa*:** Most children know instinctively to choose toys that are suited to their age, abilities, skills, and interest levels. Some younger children though may choose toys that are too advanced. Especially those with older siblings. Even though I scrutinize the lists for inappropriate choices, sometimes parents need to double check to make sure that the toys I deliver are appropriate. Before allowing children to play with a toy, parents should read the instructions carefully. Sometimes I do make mistakes...I am getting quite old you know.

***Reporter- North Pole News*:** **What are the most common toy hazards?**

***Santa*:** Choking hazards such as small balls and balloons can block a child's airway. Magnetic toys with powerful magnets can be dangerous, even life-threatening, if swallowed. Children's ears, not to mention parents nerves, are sensitive to loud, noisy toys. Strangulation hazards such as mobiles or cords should be avoided in toys for young children. Some toys such as play cosmetics can contain toxic chemicals. Lead paint is an issue highly publicized in the news lately. And don't forget that those violent video games teenagers often put on their list can cause psychological disorders. They'll never get violent videos from the North Pole, no sir! To help parents, the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) maintains an official Toy Recall List at the following link: http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/prerel/category/toy.html.

***Reporter- North Pole News*:** **What are some safety tips for young children?**

***Santa*:** For young children, I try to avoid toys that must be plugged into an electrical outlet. That is why so many toys are battery-operated. Children under age 3 can choke on small parts contained in toys or games. I try to avoid parts less than 11/4 inches in diameter and 2-1/4 inches long. Also strings and ribbons must be removed before giving a toy to a young child. Pull-toys with strings more than 12 inches in length could be a strangulation hazard for babies. Toys such as bicycles, scooters, skateboards, and inline skates are safer with protective gear such as helmets, and wrist, elbow, and knee pads. You can never be too careful you know.

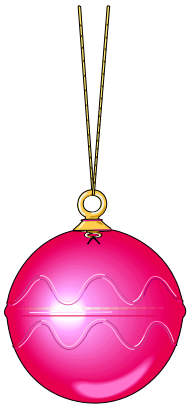
**Reporter- North Pole News: Thanks for your tips, Santa. I am sure with your help we will all have safe toys for the holidays!**

## Safety Tips for Winter Travel

Winter weather is here. The National Safety Council offers the following tips for winter travel:

* Carry emergency supplies in your vehicle. Must-haves include blankets, jumper cables, flashlight, first-aid kit, and non-perishable snacks.
* Maintain proper tire pressure.
* Replace windshield wipers if needed. Keep wiper fluid full and use fluid that can withstand freezing temperatures.
* Park in well-lit areas. Have your keys ready when you approach the car and lock doors after entering your vehicle.
* Plan for traffic. Give yourself enough time for unexpected delays.
* Take periodic breaks and do not drive if you are drowsy.
* Avoid using your cell phone while driving.
* Wear seatbelts.
* Stay alert, trust your instincts, and avoid distractions.
* Don't drink and drive.

# Holiday Decoration Policy



In compliance with applicable fire codes as enforced by the State Fire Marshal, the following policy has been established regarding the use of decorations at Tulane University during the holiday season:

**Holiday Trees** - Holiday trees must not obstruct or reduce the width of corridors, stairways, or exits. Use only artificial, flame retardant, non-conductive trees with the following two exceptions: (1) A cut tree that has been treated with effective flame-retardant materials can be used in building lobbies only. Proof of flame-retardancy must be provided. Cut trees should be placed in water to retain maximum freshness and to discourage drying. Tree and water level should be checked on an ongoing basis. (2) An "uncut" tree or living tree with its roots still attached may also be used in lieu of an artificial tree. Live trees should be watered as required.

**Decorative Lighting** - No more than three Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) listed miniature light sets may be used in decorating trees. Candles are prohibited unless the specific application is approved in writing by OEHS. Turn tree and other decorative lights off when the area is not occupied (nights, weekends, holidays).

**Decorations** - Flame retardant, non-breakable decorations are recommended. Furnishings or decorations of a highly combustible, flammable or explosive character may not be used for any type of display. Decorations may not be hung from smoke detectors, automatic sprinkler heads, pipes, or in any way that would obstruct the visibility of exits or exit signs. In buildings with automatic sprinkler systems, no combustible decorations are allowed within 18 inches of the bottom of sprinkler heads.

**Extension Cords** - Use of extension cords is discouraged. However, if used for the temporary purpose of holiday decorations, only one cord shall be used. The cord must be appropriately sized and UL approved. It must not create a trip hazard and must not be placed through concealed spaces, doorways, or windows subject to closure.

This policy can also be found at http://www.som.tulane.edu/oehs/HolidayDecorations.htm. If you have any questions regarding the application of this policy, please contact Karen Douglas (Uptown) at 865-5307 or Susan Welch (TUHSC or TNPRC) at 988-3996.

# Best Ways to Clean Sponges

Those little absorbent pads called sponges serve a multitude of tasks. Their utility and convenience is great with no trash waste and they stand ready for prompt use to tackle any momentary crisis such as wine spills or for routine tasks like washing dishes and glasses. But did you ever wonder how clean is this cleaning aid?

In a recent Environmental Health Update article in the *Journal of Environmental Health*, Vol 70, No. 2, September, 2007 there is an interesting bit of information that may strike some of you as strange and others as "old news." Nevertheless it is interesting to see this information provided in an objective and understandable form. Scientists at the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Food Technology and Safety Laboratory in Beltsville, Maryland tested a number of methods for reducing the risk from harmful germs lurking in those nice little sponges. They inoculated the sponges with microbes (20 million microorganisms per sponge) and tested five (5) methods for cleaning and treating the sponges using common materials and processes in the home. Then they measured how many microbes remained in the sponges.

Method 1 called for soaking the sponges in 10 % chlorine bleach for three minutes.
Method 2 called for soaking the sponges in lemon juice (acidic solution) or even de-ionized water for 1 minute.
Method 3 involved heating the moist sponge in a microwave for one (1) minute.
Method 4 required the sponges to be placed in a kitchen type dishwasher with a drying cycle for the duration of the cycle.
Method 5 just left the inoculated sponges untreated.

The sponges were then cultured and the findings were as follows:

Using treatment methods 1, 2, and 5, between 37 and 87 % of the bacteria were killed and between 6.7 and 63% of yeasts and mold survived. Using method 3, 99.99999% of the bacteria were killed and less than 1% (0.00001 per cent) of yeasts and molds remained in the sponges. Using method 4, 99.9998 % of the bacteria were killed and less than 1% (0.00001 per cent) of yeasts and molds remained in the sponges.

This experiment showed that microwave heating and dishwashing with a drying cycle are the most effective methods for cleaning those nice little time saving sponges so that they don't spread food borne pathogens around the kitchens and other areas of our homes. Just thought you should know!

***The Office of Environmental Health & Safety would like to wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season!***

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# New Homeland Security Rule May Affect University

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) recently finished its new "Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standard" (CFATS) which is designed to improve security at facilities which store or handle hazardous materials. The DHS believes that terrorists are attracted to facilities that handle hazardous materials because an attack could result in the release of these materials and thus amplify the destructiveness of the attack. As part of this regulation, any facility, including colleges and universities, which has any of the over 250 specific "Chemicals of Interest" (COI) listed in Appendix A of the standard, in quantities at or above the screening threshold quantities (STQ) listed for each specific chemical, must complete and submit a "Top Screen" questionnaire to the DHS and may be required to conduct a "Security Vulnerability Assessment." The CFATS list of hazardous chemicals in Appendix A includes such common materials as ammonia, propane, chlorine, nitric acid, and acetylene. Based on the information provided to the DHS, institutions will be assigned a risk level with Tier 1 being high risk and Tier 4 being low risk. If assigned a tier level, the facility will also need to develop a security plan for the chemicals of interest. Failure to complete the Top Screen can result in fines and other penalties. DHS will review the Top Screen submissions and determine which facilities will be audited for vulnerability to terrorist attack. If it is determined that Tulane falls under this new law, you will be informed of new chemical security requirements. For information on this new law or to view the list of chemicals of interest, see the DHS website at www.dhs.gov.

In reviewing the chemicals of interest listed in Appendix A of the standard, chemicals are divided into three categories – release chemicals, theft chemicals, and sabotage chemicals. With release chemicals, the concern is release from their containers. Chemicals in this category may be toxic, flammable, or reactive. Chemicals in a laboratory are generally excluded from the release category. Chemicals in the theft category DO include laboratory chemicals, but exclude materials in beakers, test tubes, equipment, etc. Sabotage chemicals include only chemicals shipped by the University. They do not include those that are only received and used. This may include some hazardous wastes if they are shipped above the screening threshold quantities, or may include laboratory chemicals moved on public roads or shipped when a researcher leaves the university.

***Does Tulane University have Chemicals of Interest (COI)?*** Yes, Tulane does have COI. ***Does Tulane have these in quantities greater than the screening threshold quantities (STQ)?*** This is what OEHS is trying to determine. It is crucial that your laboratory or work area submit a chemical inventory for 2007 if you have not already done so. (Submit it to OEHS as soon as possible, but no later than January 4, 2008. An inventory form which can be used as a guide can be found at http://www2.som.tulane.edu/oehs/safety/06F-oehss12.pdf. It is preferred that you submit your inventory electronically in Excel or Access to Pam Fatland at pfatlan@tulane.edu.) The deadline for OEHS to submit a Top Screen to DHS is January 19, 2008, but we are submitting a request for an extension until March 19, 2007.

We encourage you to properly dispose of all unwanted/unneeded chemicals from your lab or work area as soon as possible. Please contact OEHS for chemical disposal at 988-2865 or email Bruce McClue at bmcclue@tulane.edu to schedule a pickup.

# Jack Frost Can Cause Cold Stress Injuries

Freezing cold can be dangerous, but most cases of cold stress or hypothermia develop when air temperatures are between 30-50 degrees F. People who are exposed to lower temperatures are at risk for injuries ranging from frostbite to serious loss of body heat which could result in brain damage or death. The following are some things you can do to protect yourself from cold stress injuries.:

* Dress warmly, in layers.
* Keep dry.
* Take breaks in a warm environment and get out of the wind.
* Eat right.
* Don't work alone in cold/wet weather.

The effects of cold stress may not be apparent to its victim. The first symptoms of hypothermia are uncontrollable shivering and the sensation of cold. The heartbeat slows and may become irregular, and the pulse weakens. As the condition worsens, severe shaking or rigid muscles may be evident. The victim may also have slurred speech, memory lapses, and drowsiness. Cool skin, slow, irregular breathing, and exhaustion occur as the core body temperature drops even lower. This is a serious condition requiring immediate medical attention. Frostbite occurs when the fluids around the body's tissues freeze, and it can occur without accompanying hypothermia. The most vulnerable parts of the body are the nose, cheeks, ears, fingers, and toes. Symptoms of frostbite include coldness and tingling in the affected part, followed by numbness, changes in skin color to white or grayish-yellow, initial pain which subsides as the condition worsens, and possibly blisters. Frostbite can cause irreversible tissue damage and requires immediate medical attention. If you work in lower-temperature environments, always be alert for the possibility of cold stress. Follow these guidelines to help protect yourself from injury. Remember, it doesn't have to be freezing for cold stress to occur. Take steps to protect yourself.

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