



JANUARY 2025
NEWSALERT

Home Protection

Playing It Safe During the Holiday Season

THE HOLIDAYS should be a magical time. Yet each year, hospital emergency rooms treat about 8,700 people for injuries, such as falls, cuts and shocks related to holiday lights, decorations and Christmas trees.

Keep the season merry with this list of safety tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Safer trees and decorations

When purchasing an artificial tree, look for the label "Fire Resistant." Although this label does not mean the tree won't catch fire, it does indicate it will resist burning and should extinguish quickly.

When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness. A fresh tree is green, needles are hard to pull from branches and, when bent between your fingers, do not break.

Also, the trunk butt of a fresh tree is sticky with resin, and when tapped on the ground, the tree should not lose many needles.

When setting up a tree at home, place it away from fireplaces and radiators. Because heated rooms dry live trees out rapidly, be sure to keep the stand filled with water.

Place the tree out of the way of traffic and do not block doorways.

Make sure to water a live tree daily to keep it from drying out.

Never use lighted candles on a tree. Always use nonflammable holders and place candles out of children's reach.

Take care to avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable, keep trimmings with small removable parts out of the reach of children so they don't swallow or inhale them, and avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food, which may tempt a young child to eat them.

Protecting kids, pets

- Holiday decorations can easily be mistaken for a shiny snack, so keep bite-sized ornaments out of reach (this includes items like tinsel).
- Mistletoe, poinsettia, lilies and holly berries are all toxic; it's best to avoid decorating with these plants if you have kids and/or pets.
- Ensure children and/or pets don't have access to open trash cans and table scraps.
- Keep children/pets away from cooking areas; use back burners and turn pot handles inward.
- Keep fires and flames out of reach of both children and pets.
- If you have a live Christmas tree, ensure kids/pets cannot drink the water from the stand or consume fallen pine needles.

See 'Lights' on page 2

Oberryman Insurance Agency

*Wishes You
Happy Holidays*



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Turn off Decorative Lights Indoors When You Go to Bed

Light safety

Indoors or outside, always use lights that have been tested for safety by a recognized testing laboratory that indicates conformance with safety standards.

Check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections, and throw out damaged sets.

Use no more than three standard-size sets of lights per single extension cord.

Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights, and a person

touching a branch could be electrocuted.

Before using lights outside, check that they have been certified for outdoor use.

Turn off all lights when you go to bed or leave the house, as they could short out and start a fire.

Safety first

The key to a happy holiday is your family's and guests' safety. There are number of things that can wrong during this hectic time of year. But if you follow the above tips, the chances of something happening will be greatly reduced. ❖



Fish Falling from Sky Damages Car, Owner Files a Claim

A NEW JERSEY couple suddenly heard their car honking repeatedly outside their home this summer. Cynthia and Jeff Levine ran out to investigate and found that the windshield on their Tesla had been badly damaged, and in the middle of a massive crack lay a fish amid a mess of scales and blood spatter.

Had it been raining fish? Were they filming “Sharknado 5 – Revenge of the Mackerel” nearby?

Or perhaps the culprits were local pranksters. But it was obvious that the small fish had hit the windshield with force since it cause so much damage. Nobody could have thrown the fish that hard.

They went into the house to check their security camera footage, and sure enough: the fish had fallen from the sky, splattering onto the car’s windshield.

They called their insurance company, which accepted the claim, although the couple had to fork out \$1,000 for their deductible.

A few days later, when the car was in the shop, they saw an eagle flying overhead carrying a fish, and that’s when it dawned on them: one of the local birds must have dropped the fish.

When interviewed by a local TV station, the Mr. Levine said: “I lowered my deductibles, so if any birds are listening, please don’t drop it here because I’m covered now.”

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If Upgrading Your Home, Update Your Coverage



WITH FEWER homeowners willing to sell and buy a new home in this high-mortgage-rate environment, many are instead plowing money into their homes. However, they are often failing to update their homeowner’s insurance property limits to reflect the upgrades, a new report has found.

According to Nationwide Mutual Insurance’s “Homeowners Survey,” 51% of homeowners have completed a major home renovation project within the past two years and, after completing the work, 55% had not adjusted their insurance policies, leaving themselves at risk of being underinsured.

If that happens, the insurance policy limits may not be enough to cover major repairs or the cost of rebuilding.

In such cases, the homeowner would have to pay out of pocket for the difference.

Empty nesters are big spenders		
Project type	Average homeowner	Empty nesters
Kitchen remodels:	\$9,702	\$18,672
Full home renovations:	\$36,900	\$90,000
Window replacements:	\$4,917	\$15,375

“Unfortunately, our research shows that homeowners often overlook necessary policy adjustments after significant renovations, potentially leaving them underinsured in the event of a catastrophe,” said Casey Kempton, Nationwide’s president of P&C Personal Lines. “Every homeowner should review their home insurance coverage with their independent insurance agent regularly to avoid potential gaps.”

Hidden danger: Doing it yourself

Many homeowners are opting to do the work themselves.

Common do-it-yourself projects

- Basement renovations
- Front door replacements
- Bathroom remodels
- Kitchen remodel
- Full-home remodel/“gut” renovation
- Home addition (such as an additional room, a room expansion, separate garage)

Nearly two in five homeowners have taken on improvement projects that are typically reserved for experts — like a kitchen remodel — themselves due to the high cost of hiring a contractor.

High contractor costs were cited as a challenge by 75% of respondents and more than half had some trouble finding a contractor, also spurring them to take on projects themselves.

However, there is a risk for do-it-yourselfers: Their work could result in safety problems and compromise the home’s insurability, the report says. For example, mistakes like uneven surfaces could cause someone to trip.

The takeaway

Contact us to review your insurance policy before starting any major renovation. It will be important to get all the facts to ensure that your coverage limits reflect the upgrades as well as today’s rebuilding costs, which have been on the rise.

As well, if you are planning to do the work yourself, you’ll also want to ensure that all potential risks are covered. ❖



Changing Circumstances

Reviewing Life Insurance Every Year Is a Must

SINCE LIFE circumstances change over time, life insurance policies must be updated to reflect those changes. As a rule, it is best to review coverage at least once per year.

When doing this, spend some time pinpointing major life changes over the past year. Meet with Oberryman Insurance agent to go over a list of events to ensure adequate updates.

Notable events

- Did your marriage status change this year?
- Were any babies or adopted children added to the family?
- Did a spouse, child or other dependent family member die?
- Did personal debt amounts change?
- Have interest rates changed since the policy was started?
- Did working or retirement status change?
- Was there a change in income?
- Was there a partnership or ownership change in a business?
- Was a new key employee added to a personal business?
- Was any money inherited recently?
- Do parents require financial help?
- Were there any major health status changes?
- Did smoking status change?

Some of these criteria, such as being a smoker, will affect life insurance pricing on the insurer's end and on the policyholder's end. Major life events and income or debt changes are good reasons to increase a coverage amount. This is not required by the insurer.

It is important to leave enough money to cover debts, final expenses and some living expenses for heirs. If there was a significant income increase, a person may want to add more money to a life insurance policy for a child's future college fund or for an elderly parent's skilled care.

Another topic commonly overlooked by consumers is insuring a spouse who is a stay-at-home caregiver.

Men and women who stay home to take care of the house and the children make vital contributions.

If they die, the main breadwinner is left with the expense of finding someone to care for the children and the home. Paying for child care and a housekeeper can be expensive. It is important for stay-at-home caregivers to have life insurance as well.

Policy expiration

Term life insurance is a popular choice. People purchase it for a specific amount of time, such as 30 years.

If the policy's term expires without it being renewed, the policyholder is no longer covered.

There are other types of policies that do not expire, and the payout and premium remain the same regardless of health or age changes.

A person who buys a term life insurance policy at age 30 for a term of 30 years would pay much less at that point than they would pay to renew it at age 60.

If the individual started smoking and had multiple health problems, the cost to stay insured would be significantly higher.

When choosing life insurance or updating it, always keep a long-term plan in mind. People with term life insurance policies can convert them into permanent policies before they expire.

The right policy choice for each person depends on personal circumstances, health status, age and budget allowances. Although universal life insurance may be a better option than term life insurance, it is more expensive.

However, having an affordable term life insurance policy is better than going without life insurance.

To learn more about life insurance options and how much coverage to purchase for individual circumstances, please contact us. ❖