

# THE SAFETY NET

CSEA

## THE 12 DAYS OF HOLIDAY HAZARDS!

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### 12 DAYS OF HOLIDAY HAZARDS

The holiday season, with its festive atmosphere, gift giving, family gatherings and traditions, is a favorite time of year for many people. However, it also brings several unique hazards. What other time of year do we ornament our houses in strings of decorative lights, flammable adornments and candles abound? Don't let safety mishaps ruin your holiday; be aware and use safe practices amidst your seasonal festivities. This fun and informative holiday-themed issue covers typical hazards and precautions to avoid accidents at home this holiday season. With these safety tips in mind, you can enjoy your eggnog and your family without any unplanned trips to the hospital.

- 1. Driving: Traveler & Pedestrian Safety** – Prepare your car for winter, and look out for CSEA member working on the roads out there!
- 2. Hazardous Materials** – Nothing will ruin dinner faster than your guests coming down with food poisoning. If not Aunt Edna's Jell-O salad, inhaling toxic spray-on snow or deadly vapors from mixing the wrong household cleaners/disinfectants will surely ruin your holiday.
- 3. Communicable Illnesses** – Keep your germs to yourself! Reminder: if it's wet and it's not you, don't touch it.
- 4. Stress** – Take care and plan ahead to avoid No. 5. Remember: you can do anything, not everything.
- 5. Violence** – Be aware of crazed shoppers, robbers and relatives at family gatherings. The Grinch may just be a story, but thieves are all too real.
- 6. Gift Safety** – Don't give the gift of an ER visit; be considerate of age and injury risks of toys.
- 7. Falls from Heights** – While on a ladder, never step back and admire your work. Keep three points of contact.
- 8. Slips: Stairs & Ice** – Watch your step, it might be your last! Clear all walkways; housekeeping you skip may cause a fall or slip.
- 9. Fires: Kitchens & Decorations** – Light up your tree and candles, not your home.
- 10. Electrical Shock** – Those darn lights! Know basic electrical safety protocols – cords are ugly, but a burnt couch is worse.
- 11. Cuts & Lacerations** – Use precaution with power tools, saws and cooking knives. Shortcuts lead to deep cuts!
- 12. Back, Shoulder, & Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs)** – Cleaning and lifting is a breeze when you bend at your knees! Know the risks of shoveling snow- for more information, see the link below.

*Who knew holiday fun could be so dangerous? Be sure to make a list and check it twice! Wishing you all a disaster-free and happy holiday!*

**For additional information and resources, follow the links below:**

- Holiday hazards, safety tips and prevention: <https://www.nsc.org/community-safety/safety-topics/seasonal-safety/winter-safety/holiday>
- Snow removal safety hazards and precautions: <https://www.nsc.org/community-safety/safety-topics/seasonal-safety/winter-safety/snow-shoveling>
- OSHA's webpage on Holiday Workplace Safety: <https://www.osha.gov/holidaysafety>

**Find all 12 hazards and more on our A-Z list of fact sheets:** [cseany.org/safety-resources](https://cseany.org/safety-resources)

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### **Be an Advocate for Safety: Help Rebuild CSEA's Safety Network!**

Download/print this newsletter in bulletin format:

[cseany.org/safetynet](https://cseany.org/safetynet). Show us a photo of the bulletin posted in your workplace to receive a prize!

\*Send photos to [bernadette.foley@cseainc.org](mailto:bernadette.foley@cseainc.org)

#### **Green Lights on Plows**

Please remember when driving in the snow this winter that it's most likely a CSEA member behind the wheel of that plow. This year, you will probably see something new – flashing green lights on municipal plows. Plowing is a high-risk and vital activity. To enhance safety, New York recently passed a new law allowing the use of green flashing lights. The green lights have proven effective in other states and may have a positive effect on CSEA members who keep our roads clear.<sup>22</sup>

#### **Get Featured in the Safety Net!**

We love hearing from you! Share your content by responding to the Safety Net's "Reader's Response," "Member Spotlight" or "Dear Bernie" newsletter column(s) and receive a prize!

### MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

*Share your story, photo, meme, or simply give shout out to readers to be featured in the Safety Net Newsletter and receive a prize!*

### SAFETY TERM OF THE MONTH

#### **Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI)**

Ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI) and ground fault interrupters (GFI) both refer to the same exact device. A GFCI precisely monitors the balance of electrical current moving through a circuit. If the power goes where it shouldn't, for instance in an electrical short, the GFCI immediately cuts off the electricity.

**How do you tell if an outlet is a GFCI?** A GFCI receptacle is easily recognizable. Simply look for the test and reset button on the face of the outlet. When installed, any electrical device that is plugged in will be protected in the case of a ground fault. This also includes any electrical outlets that are connected on the same line.

**A "Griswold" holiday: Don't overload electrical outlets!** Reduce the risk of electrical shock and prevent fires – Plug outdoor lighting into circuits that are protected by GFCIs. If you are using non-GFCI circuits, then purchase cords or devices that provide portable, in-line GFI protection. These can be found at most hardware stores and online.



### SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

**Do you have co-workers who might want to subscribe?**

Share this newsletter with them and have them scan this QR code to subscribe.



### “DEAR BERNIE” ADVICE COLUMN

Dear Bernie,  
Recently, PESH showed up at my workplace to do an inspection. I was asked to be interviewed by the inspector, to which I agreed, and told them what information I could, but was nervous about what could potentially happen to me or my co-workers if we reported a situation that got our employer in trouble. Do I have a reason to be worried? I'd appreciate any guidance you could give about my concerns.

Thank you,  
Anonymous

Dear Reader,

Any participation in a PESH inspection is a protected activity and the employer cannot retaliate against you for participating in an employee interview. Furthermore, you have the right to have union representation during that interview. You also have the right to speak with PESH outside of the workplace and work time if you are concerned about retaliation. During the interview, you have rights to ask for a break or end the interview, if needed. You may also ask for clarification about the questions being asked of you.

Being a protected activity, your employer can't take any adverse or discriminatory actions against you such as transfer, discharge, or discipline for your participation in the inspection. If you have been disciplined for participating in the interview, PESH has a special unit that solely handles discrimination claims.

**NOTE: Discrimination complaints MUST be filed within 30 days of when the adverse action was taken against the affected worker. Discrimination claims can be initiated by contacting the nearest New York State Department of Labor, Public Employees Safety and Health Bureau office. CSEA Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Specialists can provide additional support and technical assistance for your local or unit.**

Write to “Dear Bernie” with your questions or concerns relating to workplace safety and health and receive advice from our OSH professionals!

*\*Submissions will be published anonymously.*

### DID YOU KNOW?

According to the National Safety Council:

- Each year, there are about **15,000** injuries across the country related to holiday decorating.
- About **5,000** people fall while decorating each year; **43%** of the falls are from ladders.
- In a recent two-year period, **dried trees and unattended candles** accounted for more than 1,000 fires in November and December. Each year, these fires cost **\$56 million in property loss** and **30 deaths**.
- **Traveling by car during the holidays** has the **highest fatality rate** of any form of transportation. **Alcohol** is involved in about **one third** of the fatalities.
- Each year, an average of **100 deaths** occur due to **shoveling snow**, related to **overexertion** and a resulting **heart attack**.

### WORKERS' COMPENSATION

**Hurt at Work?** CSEA endorses the law firm of Fine, Olin and Anderman Get started now by visiting <https://www.foalaw.com/csea-members/> or call at **855-637-1207**.

### NOTEWORTHY NEWS

#### OSHA Looking at Workplace Stress as a Hazard | November 22, 2022

The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) issued a bulletin in November 2022 addressing workplace stress and mental health hazards in a way that seems to indicate it views them as hazards that fall under OSHA jurisdiction, regulated under the General Duty Clause (GDC). To prove such a violation, OSHA would have to show:

- a recognized hazard of workplace stress specific to the worksite
- that the employer was aware of the recognized hazard (or should have been)
- that the employer had a “feasible or useful” means of addressing the hazard, and
- that the efforts the employer undertook to address the hazard were insufficient.

While OSHA may not be equipped to hand out citations for hazardous levels of workplace stress, this hazard is clearly on the agency's radar. More activity from OSHA regarding this subject is likely to come up in the near future.

For more information, guidance, and materials, visit <https://www.osha.gov/workplace-stress>

#### News Release: Occupational Safety and Health Administration | December 2, 2022

U.S. Department of Labor finds Family Dollar stores again exposing workers to fire, entrapment and struck-by hazards, this time at Richmond Hill, Ga. location.

OSHA proposes \$364, 645 in penalties for parent company, Dollar Tree Stores Inc.

<https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/osha/osha20221202>

### MEMBER RESOURCES

#### Materials & Publications

View/download our A-Z list of fact sheets, publications and more: [cseany.org/safety-resources](https://cseany.org/safety-resources)

Access our Publication Order Form: <https://tinyurl.com/OSHPublicationOrder>

#### Workshop Trainings & Webinars

This month's training highlights:

- Workers' Compensation and COVID-19
- Fall Protection
- Outdoor Hazards
- Back Injury
- Stress and Resiliency
- Infectious Disease Awareness
- Protecting Your Home from COVID-19

View all on-demand webinar trainings: <https://cseany.org/osh-webinars>

#### CSEA Occupational Safety & Health (OSH) Specialists

CSEA OSH Specialists can provide training, technical assistance, labor-management services, and even help establish a safety and health committee in your workplace.

Contact your OSH Specialist: [cseany.org/member-support](https://cseany.org/member-support)