



VFW Post Insurance Program

Loss Control Article

Preparing your Post for the Holiday Season

Another holiday season is approaching and many of us are looking forward to celebrations that incorporate family traditions and holiday parties. The number of functions at your Post is likely to increase. The increased activity may be a distraction from the many safety risks associated with holiday celebrations. Now is the time to pay extra attention to safety. There are precautions to take both inside and outside the premise to ensure a safe and healthy environment for holiday entertaining. Some of these precautions are listed below:

EXTERIOR CHECKLIST:

The exterior of the building and the grounds should be kept in good repair at all times.

Check for dead tree branches that could break off in a strong wind.

To reduce tripping hazards, clear debris, branches and other obstacles in parking lots, on sidewalks and stairs.

Check the parking areas for large potholes and fill them.

Fasten loose handrails at the entrance.

The roof should be checked to ensure it will withstand winter weather conditions.

Gutters and downspouts should be securely attached to the building and clear of debris.

Sidewalks, parking lots, floors and stairs should be kept free of ice and snow accumulation. Keep potentially icy surfaces salted to help prevent slip and fall accidents.

INTERIOR CHECKLIST:

CHRISTMAS TREES

Christmas trees are one of the most popular traditions of the season - and one of the most dangerous. If your Post chooses to decorate with a tree, it is safer to choose a fire-resistant, artificial tree. If a live tree is preferred, be sure it is fresh. Natural evergreen trees present a significant fire hazard and must be kept moist.

Place the tree in a sturdy, water-holding stand and keep it filled with water at all times.

Before setting the tree in the stand, cut a diagonal slice off the bottom of the trunk. This will allow the tree to absorb water helping to preserve its freshness.

Place the tree out of high-traffic areas and where it will not block any doorways.

Keep the tree away from heat sources such as fireplaces, space heaters and heating vents.

When it is time to take the tree down, take it outside as soon as possible.

Never burn the tree - recycle it instead!

HOLIDAY LIGHTS

When decorating with lights:

Only use lights that are U.L. approved.

Do not mix lights approved for outdoor use with lights approved for indoor use. Mixing may create a fire hazard.

Carefully check all lights before use for frayed wires, damaged insulation, loose connections or broken sockets and discard lights that cannot be safely repaired.

- Do not connect more than three strips of lights together. If extension cords are needed, use heavy duty cords with grounded outlets. Be sure the cords are large enough to carry the

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Preparing Your Post for the Holiday Season, continued

- intended load.
- Cords should be taped down if placed in areas where they present a tripping hazard.
- Do not run cords through doorways or under rugs. The insulation on the cords can become worn or damaged as people step on the rug, causing a shock hazard.
- Lights should not be left on overnight. Use a timer or be sure to turn off all lights when leaving the Post.

BUILDING

The presence of additional people creates increased fire and security risks. Follow these safety measures:

- Check the fire alarm system for proper operation.
- Test emergency lights should they be needed in the event of a power outage.
- It may be necessary to increase security to protect against burglary, theft and vandalism.
- Inspect the premise after each function checking that doors and windows are locked and for any missing items.
- If an alarm system is installed, test it as an added safety precaution.

FOOD

Holiday festivities almost always include sharing meals. Buffets are popular because of the ability to serve many people. To avoid transmission of food-borne illness, the following tips should be adhered to:

- Wash your hands before and after food preparation and handling.
- If preparing foods ahead of time, cook them thoroughly to safe temperatures before storing.
- Food should not sit at room temperature for

more than two hours. If entertaining for longer periods of time use smaller containers and rotate them often.

- Do not add fresh food to a container that has been sitting out. There have probably been many hands touching it.
- When the party has ended, discard food that has set out for more than two hours.

LIQUOR

The holidays are a festive time and your members may frequent your Post's bar more often for drinks and socializing. It's the perfect time to brush up on how to identify intoxicated persons and steps to take to prevent your guests from being involved in an alcohol-related accident. If you are serving a patron and they are involved in an accident you could be liable. The following should be considered:

- Discourage your guests from indulging in straight shots.
- Supply plenty of snacks which help absorb alcohol in the stomach.
- Encourage patrons to follow a "one drink per hour" rule to avoid intoxication.
- Stop serving alcoholic drinks at least one hour before the bar closes or end of a party.
- Never allow an intoxicated person to leave the premises behind the wheel -- encourage guests to choose a designated driver.

The holidays are about sharing time with family and friends. It is your responsibility to provide a safe environment for your members and guests. If you would like additional information about protecting your Post during the holiday season, call **The VFW Post Insurance Program** at (800) 829-8390. From

everyone at TheVFW Post Insurance Program - have a safe holiday season!