

**There are quite a few safety issues that are specifically associated with the holidays, such as distractions caused by office parties and frayed cords near dried-out Christmas trees. Take special care at this time of year.**

It's that time of year, the holidays are upon us. We are all busy planning for the holidays, shopping for gifts, throwing parties, and on and on. We know that we should be even more concerned about the additional hazards that exist this time of year, but heck, we are just too busy.

Please, please, please spend some of your valuable time considering all of the hazards that only exist during the hectic and busy holiday season. For instance, we all want to decorate for the holidays, and this pertains not only to our homes but also to our workplaces. We always consider some of the safety aspects when decorating at home, but we often ignore the same safety procedures when doing so at the workplace. Often circuits are overloaded, live trees are not watered—becoming a fire hazard once they're dry and brittle—cords are strung out where they can trip you as you pass, and decorations are placed in the path of emergency escapes. We must be just as concerned with safety in the workplace as we are in our homes when decorating for the season.


We all know the old jokes about congregating around the water cooler, especially with all the treats that are brought in this time of year, but consider the workers in the shop. They also enjoy the treats, and they also have them available at this time of year. However, it is a much different situation when a machine operator or setup person is eating while trying to do their job than it is for someone who spends most of their time in an office, or at their desk. The distraction of eating, or lacking the use of both hands, can make this a recipe for

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disaster. It is a good practice to provide a separate area where shop employees can indulge in holiday treats, even if it means a small loss of production time.

In addition, many of us either attend or throw seasonal parties for our fellow employees at this time of year. Serving alcoholic beverages at these parties—whether it be company sponsored or not—is a responsibility that cannot be taken lightly. We all want to be good hosts and provide things that our fellow employees will enjoy, but it is equally important to be sure that there is sober transportation available after such a party. As hosts, we have to be willing to take responsibility for being sure that all of our fellow workers are cared for in a safe manner. And remember, there's always the chance that this may lead to arguments, because no one likes to be told that they've had too much to drink to safely drive home, but it is critical that the host stands his or her ground and takes the necessary steps to assure the safety of everyone involved.

We also must take into consideration the fact that all of our employees have many distractions during this time of year, and we must be understanding as well as aware of these distractions causing possible dangers in the workplace that simply don't exist at other times of the year. One of the things to watch out for that doesn't get mentioned often enough is that some people are adversely affected by the holiday season, from a psychological standpoint, and this disorder can easily affect the safety in the workplace. It is known as “seasonal affective disorder,” or SAD, and we are told that the shortness of the days and lack of exposure to light has a lot to do with it. So it behooves us as employers to make sure that all of the lights in the workplace are in proper operating condition, and that there are no areas that are under-lighted. Believe it or not, proper lighting is conducive to better production, and also leads to happier employees. There are other hazards associated with the winter season, such as weather-related dangers, but we can only try to do our best. Making sure that warehouse workers are warmly dressed is one way to help, and also to make sure that iced-over areas around doorways and loading docks are salted or roped off to keep pedestrians away.

Okay, enough of the gloom and doom. I want to wish everyone reading this column the very best of the season, and I hope that you all receive the presents that you are wishing for. I'd also like to wish you a very safe and happy holiday season with your loved ones. 

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

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