



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## Be Sure to Keep Safety in Mind Over the Holidays this Year

**Mechanicsburg, PA** – The season of holidays is upon us! From Thanksgiving (or Friendsgiving) to New Years, the next few weeks are packed full of cooking (and eating), gift-giving, celebrations, and possibly no small amount of stress. For many families, holiday time can also include traveling to visit friends or relatives. Safe Kids Pennsylvania (SKPA) wants every family to know the simple things you can do to stay safe over the next few months, so it's one less thing you have to worry about:

### Safety on the Road:

- **Carbon Monoxide.** If you are warming up a vehicle before using it, don't forget to remove it from the garage immediately after starting it. It is extremely dangerous to leave a car, SUV or motorcycle engine running inside a garage due to the risk of CO poisoning. Also, be sure to check your car exhaust pipes to make sure they are clear of snow.
- **Seat Belts.** Everybody needs their own restraint in the car, no matter their age. Make it a rule: everyone buckled, every ride, every time, whether it's a long trip to visit family or around the block to the mall.
- **Car Seats and Winter Coats.** We know you want your little ones to be warm, but please don't buckle your child into a car seat while they are wearing a bulky coat. The puffiness of the coat creates extra space between the harness and your child, which puts your child at a greater risk of injury in the event of a crash. Instead, use a blanket to keep your child warm, or lay their jacket over them like a blanket once they're safely secured.
- **Distracted Driving.** Avoid distractions while driving. No text message is worth the risk of taking your eyes off the road. Watch out for small kids and other distracted drivers in parking lots that are busier than usual during the holidays. Additionally, if you have a teen driver in your household, remind them to be extra alert during the holidays when people are more distracted, and the weather can be tricky.

### Safety while Cooking:

- **Fire Safety.** According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), in 2019, the three leading dates for home structure fires caused by cooking were: Thanksgiving, Christmas day and Christmas Eve. Create and practice a home fire escape plan with two ways out of your house in case of a fire. This can be a fun activity for the whole family! The NFPA has resources to get you started at <https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/Staying-safe/Preparedness/Escape-planning>.
- **No Distractions!** In 2020, unattended cooking was the leading cause of cooking fires and casualties. Stay in the kitchen when you are cooking on the stovetop so you can keep an eye on the food and stay in the home when cooking food in the oven and check on it frequently.

- **Engage Kids in Cooking.** Young children are almost always excited to be helpers! Let them do age-appropriate tasks in the kitchen and teach them to keep at least 3 feet away from the stove or oven. You can also use this season to teach older kids how to cook safely. Teach them never to leave the kitchen while they're using the stove or oven, to use oven mitts or potholders when handling hot items and show them how to operate a microwave safely.

#### **Safety at Home (Your Own, or Someone Else's):**

- **Sleep Safely.** Your holiday travel plans might mean you'll be spending the night somewhere other than home, so make sure everyone has a safe place to sleep. A firm mattress covered with a tight-fitting crib sheet is all you need for your baby to sleep well. If you're worried about keeping your baby warm on those cold winter nights, try using a sleep sack (wearable blanket) and save the blankets for when baby is older. Additionally, remember to always have baby sleep alone, on their backs, in a crib (or similar flat item, like a bassinette or pack 'n play).
- **Fire Safety.** While cooking fires are the number one cause of home fires and fire-related injuries according to the NFPA, holiday decorations (including trees, (electric) lights, and candles) also pose an increased fire risk during the winter months. Be sure to keep any real tree well hydrated and discard it when dry. Keep the area around candles and flames (including the stovetop) clear of anything flammable and blow out candles when leaving a room. If there's a fireplace in the home, make sure it's protected by a sturdy screen or gate. Remember that glass screens of gas fireplaces can reach 500 degrees Fahrenheit and can take a long time to cool down.
- **Safe Toys.** Consider your child's age when purchasing a toy or game this holiday season. Before you've settled on the perfect toy, check to make sure there aren't small parts or other potential choking hazards. Keep a special eye on small pieces, including button batteries that may be included in electronic toys. While these kinds of games are great for older kids, they can pose a potential danger for younger, curious siblings.
- **Carbon Monoxide.** This is a great time to make sure your home, or another place you're staying at, has a carbon monoxide alarm (which is different from a smoke detector) on every level, especially near sleeping areas, and keep them at least 15 feet away from fuel-burning appliances.

If you would like more information about preventing unintentional injuries, call 717-766-1616 or visit [www.pasafekids.org](http://www.pasafekids.org).

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**Safe Kids Pennsylvania (SKPA)** is part of Safe Kids Worldwide's global network dedicated to keeping kids safe from preventable childhood injury, which is the number one cause of death among children ages 1 to 19. These injuries range from accidental falls, to poisonings, car crashes, drownings, and many more. SKPA promotes and supports childhood injury prevention activities through education, collaboration, and advocacy throughout Pennsylvania. Safe Kids Pennsylvania is one of many statewide coalitions under Safe Kids Worldwide, and is led by the American Trauma Society, PA Division. For more information on Safe Kids PA, visit our website at <https://www.pasafekids.org/> or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/safekidspa/>.