

All year long you've heard messages reminding you to "work safely... don't take short-cuts... prevent accidents..." To do this, of course, you have to keep your mind on your work. But this time of the year, your mind may be everywhere else but on your work. You may be thinking....

- What will I buy everyone for gifts—I hate shopping!
- How will I *pay* for all this—it costs a fortune!
- Traffic is so bad I'm a *wreck* every time I get to wherever I'm going.
- My relatives and their kids are going to be here for a whole week— please help me!
- My kids' energy levels and voice levels have quadrupled—give me peace!
- If I hear Alvin & The Chipmunks one more time, I'll smash the radio!

The experts tell us that even happy, exciting events are stressful to our minds and our bodies. Ask any individual, and he/she may perceive the holidays as a wonderful time or a dreadful time. Or, a given individual may feel differently at various times. Why?

- Normal routines and schedules are disrupted, which can feel uncomfortable.
- With so much to do, there's a lot of rushing around to get it done.
- Giving presents can be stressful—"Am I giving enough...am I giving too much...?"
- Stores/malls and other venues during the holidays are crowded and chaotic.
- Holiday gatherings can be fun, but too much food and drink can take its toll.
- "Ghosts of Christmas Past" can remind us of disappointments and bring on depression

Be aware that you may be more likely to have an accident at this time of the year—on the job, at home or on the road. At work, you may be distracted by personal matters or financial concerns and overlook safe work practices. At home, tension between family members is sometimes high, since each one feels both the good and bad holiday stress. Out-of-sorts people tend to be accident prone.

You may also find yourself taking extra physical risks—hanging colored lights on the roof, lugging a Christmas tree around, or shovelling snow. When roads and freeways are jammed with frustrated drivers the number of auto accidents increases. Driving defensively is important, and no time could be better than the holidays to remember that.

If you're facing stress this holiday season, take steps to manage it so you don't have an accident on the way! Keeping in mind that the holidays put extra pressure on everyone may help keep you and your loved ones accident-free to enjoy the season.

Stay alert. Take extra care. Have a safe *and* happy holiday!

- Every year at least 3 people break their arms while pulling holiday crackers.
 - Over 200 people are admitted to hospital after not removing all the pins from new shirts.
 - Over the last 10 years, 27 people have died testing batteries on their tongue.
 - Hundreds of people cut themselves with knives and scissors they are using to open presents.
 - Last year 2 people died eating holiday decorations they thought were chocolates.
 - Since 1997, 26 people have died watering Christmas trees with the lights on.
 - In 2007, 12 people sustained burns when trying on a new sweater with a cigarette in their mouth.
 - Last year 52 children were admitted to hospital after swallowing the contents of perfume and cologne bottles.
 - 5 People suffered 3rd degree burns last year when trying to flame torch their Christmas pudding.
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- Every year hundreds of people fall off ladders and break bones while hanging holiday decorations.