

Christmas is coming

Welcome to this Christmas edition of Safety Matters. Christmas is a special time, so it would be a pity if it was spoilt by having an accident. So we've put together a few short topical, and slightly tongue in cheek, reminders to help keep you safe at work and home.



Christmas tree lights and other kinds of decorative lights get used less often than your everyday lights, and they need more care. So...

- Check the fuses are the right type (see the box for the maximum size of fuse you should use).
- If bulbs blow, replace them.
- Don't leave fairy lights on when you go out or when you go to sleep.
- Don't let the bulbs touch anything that can burn easily, like paper.
- Don't overload sockets.
- Don't have extension leads and power cables trailing across the floor where they can be a trip hazard.

Remember that the University's policy on inspection and testing of portable electrical appliances (PAT testing) also applies to Christmas tree lights in the office. So get them checked. And make sure someone is responsible for switching the lights off at the end of the day.

Decorations

Decorations made of light tissue paper or cardboard burn easily. So don't attach them to lights or heaters, or immediately above or around the fireplace. And keep them away from candles!

Candles and tea lights

Candles mark special occasions and create a special atmosphere. They also bring fire into your home, so treat them carefully. **Remember that candles are not allowed in any University premises**, so the guidance below is for you to share with your family.

- Always put candles on a heat resistant surface.
- Be especially careful with night lights and tea lights, which get hot enough to melt plastic.
- Position candles well away from curtains.
- Make sure there's at least 1 metre between a candle and any surface above it, such as a shelf.
- Don't place them anywhere that you might need to lean or stretch over.
- Don't move candles when they are burning.
- Extinguish candles before you leave a room or go to sleep. And never leave a burning candle or oil burner in a child's bedroom.
- Double check that candles have been fully extinguished.

Slips, trips and falls

The weather has got to change sometime! After all this rain, we are heading into winter and frost and ice can be expected. So Mrs Claus says:

- Keep your pathways clear of ice and snow (use lots of salt);
- Wear footwear that's sensible for the slippery conditions - Jimmy Choo shoes are just dandy in summer, but, like orcs and elves, leather soles and ice just don't mix.



Even if the weather stays mild, wet grass, puddles, mud and high heels make for a bad combination. **So at Whiteknights, FMD will be laying better paths between the bank and the Student's Union.** Until then, it's better to stick to the tarmac paths that already exist in the area, rather than take a shortcut across the grass.

Drinking and good health

In the run-up to Christmas, the thoughts of many of us turn to enjoying ourselves with a drink or two (or "three!"). Whilst not wishing to appear like the "nanny state", we would like to offer a few timely reminders of the effects of excess alcohol on safety.

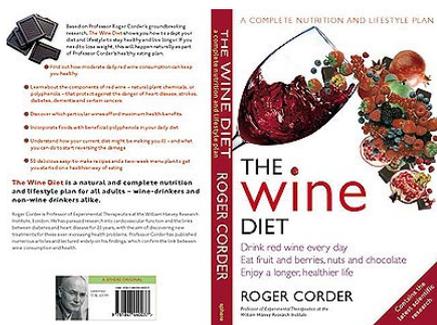
Alcohol is a depressant drug which affects perception and reaction times.

One clear message comes through: **do not operate any machinery when under the influence of alcohol.** This is especially the case when the machinery could be lethal to the user or to others – such as when driving a car (or sleigh).

The legal limit for alcohol when driving is 80mg /100ml of blood. However, it is difficult to judge if you are near the limit because this depends on the body mass of the individual, their sex, and the rate at which the alcohol is metabolised in the body. Rather than guess, **the only safe answer is not to drink and drive.** So if you go out with your colleagues for a lunch-time drink, nominate a driver to stick to the orange juice (without the vodka!).

It takes time after the last drink before anyone is “safe to drive” – this can be well into the following day. If you have a hangover on Boxing Day, you will probably not be safe or legal to drive!

Many drinks now give an indication of their alcohol content in ‘units’ – 1 unit is equivalent to 10ml of pure alcohol. As a byproduct of global warming, some grapes are ripening better and earlier, and contain more fermentable sugars. Many wines are now typically 12.5 – 14% alcohol by volume (ABV). A small 125 ml glass might contain between 1½ and 1¾ units, but could be up to 2 units. Also, be aware that many “small” glasses in pubs are now 175 ml (2¼ - 2¾ units) with “large” glasses being 250 ml (3 – 4 units).



To finish on a brighter note, have you heard about the “*wine and chocolate diet*”? This is really to my taste! This advocates a (small!) glass of red wine, and a couple of squares of good quality chocolate a day – e.g. 85% cocoa solids. The health benefits arise from anti-oxidants in the wine and the chocolate, but as with all things, moderation is the key. A small

amount every day is recommended, rather than a “binge” at the weekend. At least, that’s my excuse for having a glass every day!

Don't become stressed out

We all know that Christmas time can be a stressful period. The stressors are numerous and predictable – the family, relatives, loneliness, shopping, borrowing on credit, getting yet more brown socks – but it's still a wonderful life.

Stress isn't good for you or those around you. So here's some top tips to help you through the holiday period:

- It's the thought that counts - words, thoughts, a letter or pictures can be more meaningful than an unwanted gift.
- Don't feel pressured to overspend – if money is tight, prune the number of gifts. Announce to everyone that you're cutting back this year and tell them why. They'll understand.
- Make time for others, but also make time for yourself. Tell the kids you deserve a rest from work too. Help with the chores could mean all the difference between you enjoying Christmas or simply enduring it.
- Don't be at home to people you don't want around. If you can't face another family Christmas, don't let it trouble you. Be honest - with yourself and others, and avoid those family rows.
- Get plenty of exercise and make time for quiet relaxing activities.
- Consider a complete break away from it all – don't be a slave to tradition or habit.
- Allow yourself to have **fun**. You don't have to work continuously and be a martyr. Let yourself and others do what they want - neither the Queen's speech nor the games are compulsory. Neither is the turkey. Or getting drunk.

Stocking fillers for cyclists

Many of you cycle to and from campus. And some of you may be buying bikes for other family members for Christmas. So here's our suggested list to Santa, to make cycling safer for everyone.

Helmet – “if you like your face the way it is wear a helmet”! A helmet won't save you in a collision with Santa's speeding sleigh, but it may help you in a low speed accident on campus.



Lights – Rudolf just won't see you unless you have lights. At night you must show a white front light and a red rear one, plus a red rear reflector and amber pedal reflectors. Quick flashing LEDs are best for being seen - they really work!

Reflective clothing – A reflective vest or jacket is best at night and fluorescent materials in the day. From a car driver's viewpoint, a reflective band on a moving part of your anatomy (e.g. ankle) works better than a Sam Browne belt. A reflective rucksack cover is very effective from the rear.

Bell – Simple, low cost and essential for your Boxing Day cycle along the canal tow path. Used with consideration, it warns pedestrians that you are coming, and gives them time to move to the side.

Health and Safety Services
Facilities Management Directorate

Wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

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