

TITLE: 2196 INJURIES DON'T TAKE HOLIDAYS

LENGTH: 19 MINUTES

PRODUCTION YEAR: 2003

PROGRAM SYNOPSIS:

While the holiday season should be a joyous time enjoyed with your family, all too often needless tragedies occur because holiday hazards are ignored. Fire hazards posed by cooking, candles, Christmas trees and careless smoking are frequently neglected. People often forget about the dangers of driving in wintry conditions or under the influence of alcohol during this time of year.

In this video, EMT/Firefighter/Best-Selling Author Martin Lesperance discusses the safety precautions people must take to prevent injuries and deaths during the winter holidays. Martin also recalls real stories of emergencies he has attended to make the point that "injuries don't take holidays."

SHOOTING LOCATION: Employee meeting room, homes and roads

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES: After watching the program, the participant will be able to explain the following:

- What happens during a real residential fire;
- Fire hazards posed by holiday cooking, candles, Christmas trees and careless smoking;
- Why smoke detectors and seatbelts are so important;
- The dangers of alcohol during the holiday season.

INSTRUCTIONAL CONTENT:

The Following Are Points Martin Makes During His Presentation About Holiday Safety:

DECEMBER HEADLINES

- This December you will be reading newspaper headlines that go like this: "Two Children Die In House Fire," "Four Dead After Head-On Collision," "Ten-Year-Old Boy Drowns After Breaking Through Ice While Walking On River," etc.
- While we may not know exactly when they are going to happen, these tragedies do happen every December.
- These tragedies are especially disturbing because the holidays should be a joyful occasion spent with family and friends.
- Martin recalls a fire he responded to as an EMT to illustrate a holiday tragedy. Two adults in a mobile home died from carbon monoxide poisoning and smoke inhalation in their bedroom, but their children weren't so lucky. They were found at the padlocked back door of the home, burned to death because they couldn't get out.

WHAT A "REAL" FIRE IS LIKE

- When you see a fire on television or in a movie, you see a bright orange flame in one corner and a bright orange flame in another corner with little patches of fire throughout the room and very little smoke. Everyone gets out alive.
- In a real fire, everyone doesn't get out alive. Last year, over 3,500 people didn't get out alive.
- To explain what a real fire is like, Martin explains how the tragedy unfolded:

"Now, here's what a real fire is like. And this is exactly what happened to those little children. Earlier that night one of the parents was having a cigarette, dropped the ash on the couch. They thought they had put it out, but they didn't. They went to bed. That little hot ash was starved for oxygen. And it smoldered and it smoldered inside that couch until a couple of hours later it burst into a tiny flame. That tiny flame quickly grew. Now about a quarter of the couch is on fire. The fire spreads to the lampshade, which in turn spread it to the drapes. Once the drapes caught fire, that room was totally engulfed in flames. Those flames were producing hot, poisonous black smoke, which worked its way down the hallway and into the open door of the bedroom of the parents. They inhaled the smoke without even waking up. The flames grew hotter and hotter and hotter and the smoke got more intense and worked its way down the hallway and one of the children woke up, knew something was horribly wrong, went and woke up his brother and sisters. They couldn't get out in the front. They went to the back door and that's where they burned. And that shouldn't have happened."

- Fires happen all year round, but during the winter holidays we are more prone to doing certain activities that increase the chance of fire in our homes.

COOKING FIRES

- Firefighters respond to probably more kitchen fires than any other kind of fire. They can easily happen any time of year, but they are especially common during Christmas.
- While you are doing extra cooking during Christmastime, you are also busy wrapping gifts and doing other holiday activities. During these activities, you forget that you had something on the stove and a fire breaks out.
- Before you know it, you have a major emergency happening and you don't even know about it unless your smoke detectors go off and warn you.
- Cooking can definitely increase the chance of a fire in your home, so be aware of it during the holiday season.

DANGERS POSED BY CANDLES

- The holiday season brings the increased use of candles. While they may be romantic and smell good, they also have an open flame and must be treated with respect.
- You have to use them with caution because all it takes is contact with drapes or a Christmas tree and a candle has created a huge fire. Make sure they are kept away from flammable materials.
- If you aren't going to be using a candle or you're going out of a room, make sure to put it out. Make sure to put candles out when you're going to bed at night.

- Use extreme caution with candles if you have children in the house. They are fascinated by fire and are likely to try to make contact with the candle or its flame, which can result in a fire.

CHRISTMAS TREE HAZARDS

- Christmas trees, especially live trees, are potential fire hazards. They need a tremendous amount of water because they dry out really fast.
- A dry Christmas tree, when it burns, virtually explodes and anything within the room will be fully engulfed in flames within a matter of seconds.
- A Christmas tree needs a tremendous amount of water. Check the water level every day.
- Replace any broken bulbs on Christmas tree lights immediately. If you notice any bare wires or problems with cords, don't use them; replace them immediately.
- Keep Christmas trees away from any open flame or any source of heat, including fireplaces, candles, electric heaters, kerosene heaters and anything else that can dry it out or set it on fire.
- Artificial trees can also cause fires, usually due to shorts in the wiring system. Use only the appropriate wires and make sure they are in good condition.
- Make sure you place your Christmas tree away from exits in the home so you will have a clear path in case you have to get out fast.

CARELESS SMOKING

- Possibly the biggest cause of fire-related deaths is careless smoking. All it takes is someone to drop an ash on upholstery (as mentioned earlier) to start a fire.
- People empty hot ashtrays in the garbage and they smolder for hours before causing a fire in the middle of the night.
- If there are going to be people smoking in your home use extreme caution. Don't go to bed until you're absolutely sure all the ashtrays are cold; the best way to do that may be to put them in the sink and fill them with water.

SMOKE DETECTORS

- If a fire does occur at your home, you want an early warning system. Smoke detectors save lives by giving you time to get out of the building.
- Make sure you have smoke detectors in every main area of the house, including the basement and outside the sleeping areas.
- Make sure they are functioning properly. Follow the manufacturer's guidelines for testing them to make sure they do work.
- When you hear the sound that indicates a low battery, replace that battery immediately. Don't just throw it away because you may forget to replace it.

DRIVING SAFETY

- Martin recalls an automobile accident he attended one December night:

"It was a December night, 8 o'clock. And we had a call to a motor vehicle collision just outside the city limits on a secondary highway. And as we pulled up to the vehicle, we saw half of it had been kinda ripped apart and hanging out of the vehicle were 2 people. One was a little boy about 10 years old, the other one was his dad. And as we went up to them I looked at the little boy and just at the angle of his body I knew he couldn't have survived the crash. So I checked for signs of life and there wasn't any. So we took him outside. And I remember laying him on the side of the ditch and the ditch was full of snow and I kinda thought to myself: "I shouldn't have to be doing this to a little boy." And then we checked the father for signs of life and there weren't any. So we took him out and covered him up with blankets. The other paramedics that checked the other vehicle, they were transporting their patients back to the hospital. So there wasn't anything else we could do. Fifteen minutes later we went back to the fire house."

- One of the three contributing factors to these deaths was speeding. They were traveling too fast for conditions. When there is freezing rain, snow or other adverse conditions, you need to slow down.
- Another contributing factor was that the two weren't wearing seatbelts. Seatbelts save lives by preventing you from being violently thrown around inside a vehicle during a rollover. Also, they keep you from exiting the vehicle through a window and having the vehicle roll over you.
- Also, seatbelts prevent you from going face first into the windshield in the event of a head-on collision. It also keeps you from hitting the steering wheel with your chest, which can cause broken ribs, punctured lungs and internal bleeding (which could cause you to bleed to death).
- The third contributing (and probably biggest) factor in the crash was alcohol. The autopsy of the man revealed that his alcohol blood level was four times the legal limit.
- You have to make sure you don't drink and drive, whether you give your keys to someone else, take a cab or use a service that will drive you and your car home.

OTHER PROBLEMS CAUSED BY ALCOHOL

- Quite often domestic disputes occur during the holiday season. A lot of these disputes, which sometimes leave children "scared to death," are fueled by alcohol.
- The holiday season should be good memories for children. Don't abuse the alcohol.

CONCLUSION

- Martin concludes his presentation with the following story and summary about holiday safety:

"I'd like to conclude with one last story. A friend of mine is a professional Santa Claus. He goes into malls and he makes a great Santa Claus. And he was telling me this one story. Happened last year, where he's sitting in the big Santa Claus chair and he's got the beard and he looks like Santa Claus. And all these children were lined up and he noticed this little boy about 6 years old. He was in line with his dad. The boy patiently waited in line. Finally it was his turn so he came running up, sat on his knee, and put his arms around Santa Claus. So Santa Claus says in his best Santa Claus voice, says: "Ho, Ho, Ho. What's your name?" He says: "It's Ricky." He says: "Well Ricky, what would you like for Christmas?" And he looked at Santa Claus and says: "I would like my mommy and my little sister back." Santa looked at him and he says: "Where are they?" He says: "They're in heaven." And he said: "They died last year just after Christmas in a car crash." He says: "I miss them so much. I want them back. Can you give them back to me?" Santa Claus looked at him and said: "I wish I could, but I can't." Santa looked at the dad, he was standing over there, had a tear coming down his cheek. He came up, took his son, and walked away.

Little boys, little girls shouldn't have to ask Santa Claus to bring back their mommy, or to bring back their daddy, or to bring back a brother or sister. They should be asking for toys. Safety has to be a 24 hour concern, 365 days a year. You are going to take winter holidays; injuries won't. Please have a very safe holiday season and the best to you in the New Year. Thank you very much."