

Winter Holiday Safety

By Dr. Ben Bond, SECO

With fire-safety and common sense, you can make sure tragedy does not come between you and the festive holiday you have planned. Follow these fire prevention tips to help you and your family have a safe and happy holiday season.



Keep your family and overnight guests safe with a working smoke detector on every level of the house, in every bedroom, and in the halls adjacent to the bedrooms. Test smoke detectors monthly and replace batteries at least twice a year.

Overnight guests should be instructed on the fire escape plan, and designated meeting place for your home.

Have a fire extinguisher available not more than 10 feet from the stove, on the exit side of the room.

A class ABC multi-purpose dry chemical extinguisher is recommended. Know how to use your fire extinguisher.

Start holiday cooking with a clean stove and oven. Keep the kitchen off-limits to young children and adults that are not helping with food preparations to lessen the possibility of kitchen mishaps.

When cooking, do not wear clothing with loose sleeves, or dangling jewelry. The clothing can catch on fire and the jewelry can catch on pot handles, causing spills and burns.

Cook on the back burners when possible and turn pot handles in so they do not extend over the edge of the stove. Never leave cooking unattended. If you must leave the kitchen while cooking, turn off the stove, or have someone else watch what is being cooked.

Keep Seasonal decorations and kitchen clutter away from sources of direct heat.

Candles are often part of holiday decorations. Candles should never be left burning when you are away from home, or after going to bed. Candles should be located where children will not be tempted to play with them, and where guests will not accidentally brush against them. The candleholder should be completely noncombustible and difficult to knock over. The candle should not have combustible decorations around it.



Ride Sharing...Helping the Environment

By: Will Freeman, SECO



Bernie Denno (SECO) has recently formed a 7-person van pool that travels from his home in Crofton, MD to NOAA Headquarters in Silver Spring, MD. He had been participating in a 3-person (was 4-person for several years) car pool since 1999. All van pool members work at NOAA Headquarters at the Silver Spring Metro Complex. Due to the location of Crofton and the respective Metro Lines it is difficult to use the Metro system efficiently. The 54-mile round trip via car/van is the most time efficient mode of travel.

While looking at van options Bernie found that Van Pool Services Incorporated (VPSI) accepts the Metro Checks provided as an employee subsidy to each employee utilizing a qualified mode of travel (metro, bus, train, etc.), just like cash. Each NOAA employee receives \$115.00 in Metro Checks. With a 7-person van pool the total monthly Metro Check value is \$805.00. This amount is sent to VPSI, along with a check from the Van Pool members, to pay for the van rental (rental fee includes insurance, maintenance, repairs, etc.). It is expected that the "out of pocket" cost for each member will be \$80 for monthly travel! Additionally, the members own vehicles are driven 1,000 miles less each month!

Bernie was notified by Montgomery County (MC) employee Tammy Bowles that his van pool is the "first official Montgomery County van pool traveling to Downtown Silver Spring!!

Way to go Bernie!!

Some of the particulars:

- Use of a brand new 7-person Dodge Caravan from VPSI
- Parking for the van pool is "FREE" – Montgomery County parking garage @ SSMC
- The van is an 85% Ethanol capable vehicle (great for the environment)
- Distance traveled is 54 miles round trip each day
- Van pool will take six vehicles off of DC Metro roads



Gas Usage Comparison

350 gallons per month vs. 52 gallons for van – 298 gallons less

Environmental Consideration

Reduction of up to 71,000 lbs of CO2 emissions every year

Each member receives a federal transportation subsidy of \$115.00 per month

(\$805.00 total)

Cost of the van rental is \$1150.00 per month

Estimated gas usage per month is 52 gallons of fuel vs. 350 gallons



For more information on this great program or would like to form a van or car pool, contact Bernie at Bernie.denno@noaa.gov





FALL-WINTER SAFE DRIVING TIPS



Source: National Traffic Safety Institute

Fall is perhaps the most beautiful time of the year, but can present its own colorful set of challenges when driving. Decreasing daylight and wet leaves create challenges for the unsuspecting driver. The National Traffic Safety Institute (NTSI) recommends these tips to help you navigate fall driving hazards.

Patches of fallen leaves can be just as treacherous as patches of ice. Fallen leaves retain large amounts of water and can create a slippery surface. Drive slowly through them and avoid hard or panic braking.

Fall brings the first frost. Be aware of slippery conditions that occur with frost. At freezing or near freezing temperatures, the moisture on bridges and overpasses will become ice much more quickly than the roadway. The roadways hold heat and the bridges do not; you can go from wet roadway to ice in just a fraction of a second.

School buses are as common in the fall as dandelions in the spring. Be particularly careful around them. Your responsibility in the presence of a bus with an extended stop arm and flashing red lights is to stop and remain stopped until the warnings are withdrawn, regardless of your direction of travel. The only time a driver is not required to stop when approaching the front of the school bus is if the bus and the vehicle are on separated roadways.

Frost, sunshine, wet leaves on the road, school buses, and kids horsing around on the way to school can be a disaster if they come together at the wrong time. Please recognize the hazard and drive accordingly.

Rain, fog, sleet and wet snow also require full driver attention. Remember the "two-second rule" when following other drivers, and in severe weather increase your following distance. If you are being tailgated, let the other driver pass.

As you know, the sun rises later and sets earlier as fall approaches. Your commute to and from work may find you driving directly into the sun. Be sure your windows are clean, inside and out, and have sunglasses handy. When you lower your visor, push it all the way forward, then pull it back to the proper position. Don't leave the edge of the visor inches from the bridge of your nose where it could cause injury in a crash. If you're driving away from a low sun, glare will not be a problem for you, but it can be for the drivers approaching from the other direction. It may help to use your low beam headlights, allowing you to be seen more readily.

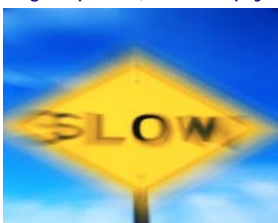
The decreasing daylight may also mean that some drivers will be commuting in twilight or dark conditions. A driver's vision, including depth perception, color recognition and peripheral vision, is compromised in darkened conditions. Diminished visual ability, brought about by the natural aging process, leaves the older driver more vulnerable to night driving hazards. The human body becomes more relaxed and less alert in the dark, becoming more easily lulled and drowsy. However, there are ways to minimize the hazards associated with driving in the dark:

Prepare your eyes for night driving. When you step out of a brightly lit building into a darkened environment it takes anywhere between two and five minutes for your eyes to begin adjusting to the change in light conditions and it takes a full 30 minutes to fully adjust. Allow your eyes that little extra time to adjust before driving into the dark.

Make sure your headlights, tail lights and turn signals are all working properly. Turn your headlights on as soon as the light begins to fade. Always use low beams when traveling in foggy conditions the light of your high beams will simply be reflected off the moisture in the air right back at you.

Check the aim of your headlights. Badly aimed headlights reduce the distance you can see and possibly blind oncoming drivers. If you think your headlights are not aimed properly have them adjusted. You can adjust them yourself by checking them against a blank, flat surface while parked on a level driveway, or take them to a professional.

Common sense along with the basics of safe driving (always wearing a safety belt, driving alert and sober, and driving at safe and legal speeds) can help you travel safely in the fall.



RECYCLING...JUST DO IT!

By: Lori Bongiorno

There are now more recycling options than ever for conscious consumers looking to responsibly dispose of unwanted stuff. Many of us have access to curbside recycling for the basics and several retailers offer convenient take-back programs. Still, it can be hard to figure out what to do with often overlooked things like plastic hotel key cards, wine corks, and CDs. Luckily, a simple trip to the post office can accomplish a lot.

Plastics and Packaging

* Earthworks (<http://www.earthworkssystem.com/index.html>) recycles PVC plastic cards (hotel keys, gift cards, etc.) and turns them into sheets that new cards can be made of. Drop cards in the mail if your retailer doesn't already take them back. Address is: Earthworks, c/o Halprin Industries, 25840 Miles Road, Bedford, Ohio 44146-1403. Magnetic strips are okay. Don't send credit cards or those that contain paper backing.

* Recycline's Preserve Gimme 5 (<http://www.recycline.com/gimme5/>) program collects clean plastic containers that have a #5 stamped on the bottom (yogurt cups, ketchup bottles, sour cream containers, and more). Recycled plastic is transformed into razors, bowls, and many other cool products (that you can also send back when you're done with them). To maximize eco-benefits, the company suggests using ground shipping.

* TerraCycle (<http://www.terracycle.net/>) creates shower curtains, totes, and funky fashion accessories out of old energy bar wrappers, drink pouches, and other packaging. It recycles wine corks too. In some cases, you need to mail in large quantities so look for a drop-off location or send in your neighbors' stuff too.

Apparel and Shoes

* Nike's Reuse-A-Shoe (<http://www.nikereuseashoe.com/>) program has collected almost 22 million worn out athletic shoes since 1990. The shoes are ground up and turned into athletic fields. Nike's prefers that you drop off shoes at participating stores, but you can also mail them.

* Patagonia's Common Threads Garment Recycling Program (<http://www.patagonia.com/usa/patagonia.go?assetid=1956>) turns your old Patagonia clothing into new garments. Visit this website for specifics on what they take back and where you can send it.

E-waste

* Battery Solutions (<http://www.batteryrecycling.com/residential>) sells boxes that you can fill up with batteries (both rechargeable and non-rechargeable), cell phones, PDAs, iPods, and others. The \$24 fee includes a pre-paid FedEx shipping label.

* GreenDisc (<http://greendisk.com/gdsite/pack-ITservices.aspx>) recycles CDs, DVDs, video and audio tapes, and their cases. You can also send in most computer related waste-anything from printer cartridges to mice to laptops. It costs \$6.95 to process up to 20lbs of waste.

* Waste Management's Think Green (<https://www.thinkgreenfromhome.com/ThinkGreenFromHome.cfm>) program sells recycling kits for batteries, CFLs, fluorescent tubes, and electronics. Prices vary depending on item. Fill the box they send you and mail it in.

For more information please visit: (<http://www.greengreenergreenest.com/>)



HOLIDAY SECURITY TIPS

by: **Richard L. Duncan,**
Office of Security, NOAA



The holiday season from Thanksgiving through New Year's is a busy shopping and travel period. It is the most heavily traveled time of the year. Unfortunately, it is also a time of year when criminal activity increases dramatically. The following security related tips are provided to assist you in planning for a safe and secure holiday period.

Before You Shop

Carry only small amounts of cash and only the credit cards you need.
Avoid using ATMs in secluded locations or at night, especially if you are alone. Be cautious when using ATM machines.
Carry your keys, cash and credit cards separate from each other.

While Shopping

Carry your bag or purse close to your body and always zipped. Always carry wallets in your front pockets.
Do not leave your bags unattended when shopping or paying for an item. If necessary, place your bags between your feet and the counter or the rack.
Leave the store well before closing time. This way, there is greater assurance you will walk out with other people. There is safety in numbers.
Be vigilant when hurried or in a crowded shop. Make sure you get all forms of ID and credit cards returned to you before leaving.
Always be vigilant and use your "street smarts".

Parking Lots

Park your car as close to the store entrance as possible and in well-lit areas. Avoid parking next to large vehicles, bushes, or dumpsters.
Walk in areas that are open and well lit.
If available, ask security to escort you to your vehicle if you are leaving late at night.
Some people have tendencies to get into their cars and just sit balancing their checkbooks or checking lists. Do not do this.
As soon as you get into the car, lock the doors and leave.
When getting into your car in a parking lot or parking garage:

- o **BE AWARE**
- o **LOOK AROUND YOU**
- o **LOOK INTO YOUR CAR** (floor boards, front and rear)



Always have your car keys in your hand to ensure easy access to your vehicle.
If you feel threatened, press the alarm button on your car remote. If the alarm goes off on the car, it will normally discourage would be perpetrators.
If you are leaving an area and a van with side sliding doors is parked beside your vehicle, enter your vehicle from the opposite side door.
Check around and inside your car as you approach it. Look at the car parked next to either side of your vehicle. If someone is sitting alone in the seat nearest your car, you may want to walk back to where you came from and have someone walk with you to your vehicle.
If you notice a large flyer on your windshield after you get into your car, do not get out to dispose of it. Drive to another area to remove the flyer. Use of flyers is a common carjacking technique.
Always take the elevator instead of the stairs. Stairwells are horrible places to be alone and the perfect crime spot. This is especially true at night.
Use the buddy system if possible when shopping. There is safety in numbers.
You don't want to be taken by surprise.
Keep your packages stored out of sight in the trunk of your car if you are going to continue shopping at another location.

At Work

Start with the realization that **I can be a victim of crime**
If you have gifts and other valuables at the office, do not leave them where they can be seen through a door or window.
Start a buddy system with your coworkers to watch out for each other's property.
Keep your purse, wallet or other valuables with you at all times or locked in a drawer or closet.
Avoid leaving your office unattended. If it must be unattended, **lock the door**, even if you are out only for a few minutes. It only takes several **seconds** for someone to enter an office and remove a wallet, purse or other personal belongings.
If you must work late or on weekends, tell a friend, coworker or uniformed officer of your location. Stay away from dark or out of the way areas of the building.
Challenge all visitors to your office and report suspicious persons immediately.
Do not carry large sums of cash; flashing a wad of currency sets you up to be a victim of a crime.
Don't advertise your social life to strangers visiting your place of work.



The best way you can be proactive is by keeping you and your coworker's safety and security foremost in your mind!

Space Heater Safety

Simple steps to follow on the safe use of heating equipment in office spaces. Always ensure the equipment is operating in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations.

Wall Mounted Heaters

1. Maintain the heaters at a comfortable heat range (from 68-72 degrees depending on outside temperature).
2. Keep all combustible materials at least 20" away from all sides of the heating unit.
3. Any heating unit that has damages from incidental contact or if the unit is emitting an odor/ burning smell should be immediately taken out of service.
4. Turn off the heater when not in use or at the end of each work day.

Portable Space Heaters

1. All space heaters shall be UL approved and purchased by the agency.
2. Privately-owned space heaters shall not be authorized for use at work.
3. All space heaters shall be plugged into a wall receptacle, not a surge protector, to avoid overloading a circuit.
5. All space heaters shall have an automatic shut-off switch in the event of tip-over.
6. Keep all combustible materials (paper, clothing, wood) at least 20" away from all sides.
7. All space heaters shall be turned off and unplugged when not in use.
8. Do not leave a space heater turned "on" overnight or unattended.

The use of flammable chemicals near heaters with an ignition source may result in a fire or explosion causing severe injury or fatality. Contact your safety manager or facilities maintenance to determine if flammable chemicals could be used in the proximity of your heating unit.



New Safety Goals for Line Offices

By: Thomas Altvater, SECO

In accordance with the White House Safety, Health and Return-to-Employment (SHARE) directive which requires all Agencies to set goals that are at least 3% below the previous year's incident rates, Line Office goals are as follows:

Line Office	NWS	NMFS	OMAO	CORP	NOS	OAR	NESDIS	USEC	ALL NOAA
Recordable	0.77	1.76	4.18	0.67	0.63	0.55	0.40	0.44	1.24
Lost Time	0.34	0.80	1.79	0.50	0.09	0.29	0.26	0.44	0.59

Recordable Incidents are those injuries requiring a medical treatment without loss of time of a full day away from the job. Lost Time incidents are those that have at least one full day away from work following the date of the incident.

The numbers noted above are in essence the percentage of employees involved in medical injury incidents.

These goals are very aggressive because in 2008 we had a good safety performance year and now we have to do even better. Over the past 5 years, NOAA reduced the amount of new claims by over 30%, thereby avoiding conservatively over \$ 1 million.

NOAA wide safety program goals for 2009 have also been established and include the following:

1. Establish Program Oversight Strategy for NOAA Diving Program.
2. Radiation Safety Program Established and Promulgated.
3. Grow NOAA's Implementation and Transparency of EO 13423 (Strengthening Environmental, Energy and Transportation Management).
4. Establish training for advanced accident investigation procedures.
5. Perform more risk management analyses of NOAA processes.

These may change as plans are finalized. Most certainly each Line Office will provide their own specialized goals.

Have a Safe and Fruitful Year!

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is brought to you by the staff of the Safety and Environmental Compliance Office (SECO). The issues will be produced on a quarterly basis and posted on <http://www.seco.noaa.gov/> to help increase awareness of the environmental, safety and health programs. If you have any questions or comments, please contact SECO at (301)713-2870.