Health and Safety Newsletter—December 2012

It is once again that time of the year. Snow crested lawns, festive lights dangling from houses, and best of all holiday cooking. In 2010 the National Fire Protection Association reported 156,400 house fires from a result of kitchen fires. This resulted in 420 deaths and $993 million dollars of property damage. To stay safe this holiday season, the NFPA has a few tips to keep you and your families safe.

- Keep anything that could catch fire such as oven mitts, utensils, towels or curtains away from the stovetop and direct heat.
- Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave, even for a minute or two, turn the stove off.
- Stay alert. If you are tired or have been drinking do not cook.

As always remember to stay safe and enjoy your holidays. In the event of a kitchen fire, get out as quickly as possible, call 9-1-1, and close the door behind you to keep the fire contained.

Texting While Walking—Adam Sidelinger

You see it every day—students, faculty, and staff alike talking and texting on their phones while walking. While talking and texting aren’t necessarily dangerous, doing it while walking is. I’ve seen numerous students texting while crossing sidewalks, walking to class, and while driving.

By now we should all know what can happen when you text and drive, but what about texting and walking? In Fort Lee, New Jersey it is against the law to do just that. If you are caught texting while walking, which has resulted in 117 traffic violations and 3 deaths, you will be fined $85 dollars.

Remember the YouTube video last year in which a woman fell into a fountain while walking and texting at the mall? If you do a quick YouTube search of texting while walking, you’ll see this and dozens more.

In 2008 there were over 1000 people injured from texting and walking. I know how important it can seem to get that text out as soon as it comes in, but give your fingers, and your ego a break, after all, isn’t a missed text better than a bruised ego?
Seasonal Affective Disorder or SAD is seasonal depression caused by lack of sunlight. If you feel depressed in the winter months, the time of year when daylight is the shortest, but feel fine in the spring and summer, you may suffer from this form of depression. According to WebMD.com, lack of sunlight can cause an imbalance of serotonin, the chemical in the brain that regulates mood. When this happens you may experience the following:

- Lost interest in your normal activities.
- Feeling moody, upset, or anxious.
- Eating or craving excess carbohydrates
- Weight gain
- Excess sleep and feeling tired during the day.

Although this mainly affects women ages 15 thru 55, men are at risk as well. Treatments for SAD include light therapy, antidepressants, and exercising first thing in the morning to energize your body.

If you think you may have SAD, talk to your health care provider and see what you can do to combat the winter time blues.

Carbon monoxide or CO is known as the silent killer. It’s an invisible, odorless, colorless gas that is produced from incomplete burning of gas, wood, coal, natural gas, propane, oil, and methane. In 2010, fire departments in the United States responded to over 80,000 carbon monoxide calls, an average of 9 calls per hour. If not found in time, carbon monoxide will kill you. Infants, the elderly, those with health disorders and pregnant women are at the greatest risk.

Keep yourself safe from CO poisoning:

- Install CO alarms that will alert you to the danger before it happens.
- When using portable heaters or generators, be sure you have adequate ventilation.

Never burn wood, coal, or charcoal inside your home without having a properly maintained chimney or vent.

Have your home furnace and chimney inspected once per year.

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