

MIKE'S Tool Box

Mike Forner's Home Services:

MY MISSION IS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY BY PROVIDING PROMPT, COMPREHENSIVE, EXPERT HOME MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS. I WILL TREAT YOUR HOME AS IF IT WERE MY OWN!



Holiday Hazard Checklist

The holidays should be a magical time for children. Yet each year, hospital emergency rooms treat about 8700 people for injuries, such as falls, cuts and shocks, related to holiday lights, decorations and Christmas trees.

Keep the season merry with this list of safety tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Safer Trees and Decorations

- When purchasing an artificial tree, look for the label "Fire Resistant." Although this label does not mean the tree won't catch fire, it does indicate the tree will resist burning and should extinguish quickly.
- When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness. A fresh tree is green, needles are hard to pull from branches and when bent between your fingers, needles do not break. The trunk butt of a fresh tree is sticky with resin, and when tapped on the ground, the tree should not lose many needles.
- When setting up a tree at home, place it away from fireplaces and radiators. Because heated rooms dry live trees out rapidly, be sure to keep the stand filled with water. Place the tree out of the way of traffic and do not block doorways.
- Cut a few inches off the trunk of your tree to expose the fresh wood. This allows for better water absorption and will help to keep your tree from drying out and becoming a fire hazard.
- Use only noncombustible or flame-resistant materials to trim a tree. Choose tinsel or artificial icicles of plastic or unleaded metals. Leaded materials are hazardous if ingested by children.
- Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens. Always use nonflammable holders and place candles out of children's reach.
- Take special care to avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable, keep trimmings with small removable parts out of the reach of children to avoid the child swallowing or inhaling small pieces, and avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food, which may tempt a child to eat them.
- Wear gloves to avoid eye and skin irritation while decorating with spun glass "angel hair." Follow container directions carefully to avoid lung irritation while decorating with artificial-snow sprays.

Bright Ideas for Lights

- Indoors or outside, always use lights that have been tested for safety by a recognized testing laboratory that indicates conformance with safety standards.
- Check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections, and throw out damaged sets.
- Use no more than three standard-size sets of lights per single extension cord.
- Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights, and a person touching a branch could be electrocuted.

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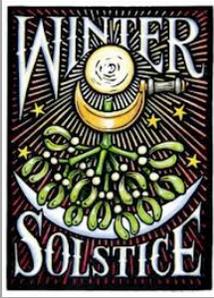
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Upcoming Events In December
That Might Interest You...



* Winter Solstice is Sunday, December 21st.



* Christmas is Thursday, December 25th.



* Tran-Siberian Orchestra Schedule for December 2014:

When: Sunday the 7th

Where: Van Andel Arena, Grand Rapids MI

What Time: 3:00pm & 7:30pm

When: Saturday the 27th

Where: The Palace of Auburn Hills, Detroit MI

What Time: 3:00pm & 8:00pm



* Holiday Nights in Greenfield Village on December 5-7, 12-14, 18-23 and 26-27, 2014 (6:30pm - 10pm). Step into a Christmas card from the past complete with candlelit paths, live entertainment, Santa and live reindeer, holiday shops, a fireworks display & more.

Holiday Hazard Checklist Continued...

- Before using lights outdoors, check labels to be sure they have been certified for outdoor use.
- Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, house walls, or other firm supports to protect the lights from wind damage. Use insulated staples to hold strings in place, not nails or tacks. Or run strings of lights through hooks (available at hardware stores).
- Plug all outdoor electric decorations into circuits with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFI outlet) to avoid potential shocks.
- Turn off all lights when you go to bed or leave the house. The lights could short out and start a fire.

Friendlier Fireplaces

- Use care with "fire salts," which produce colored flames when thrown on wood fires. They contain heavy metals that can cause intense gastrointestinal irritation and vomiting if ingested. Keep them away from children.
- Do not burn wrapping papers in the fireplace. A flash fire may result, as wrappings ignite suddenly and burn intensely.
- Before lighting any fire, remove all greens, boughs, papers, and other decorations from fireplace area. Check to see that the flue is open.

Trouble-Free Toys

- Before buying a toy or allowing your child to play with a toy that he has received as a gift, read the instructions carefully. If the toy is appropriate for your child, show him or her how to use it properly.
- Follow recommended age ranges on toy packages. Toys that are too advanced could pose a safety hazard for younger children.
- To prevent both burns and electrical shocks, don't give young children (under age ten) a toy that must be plugged into an electrical outlet. Instead, buy toys that are battery-operated.
- Children under age three can choke on small parts contained in toys or games. Government regulations specify that toys for children under age three cannot have parts less than 1 1/4 inches in diameter and 2 1/4 inches long.
- Children under age 8 can choke or suffocate on uninflated or broken balloons. Remove strings and ribbons from toys before giving them to young children.
- Watch for pull toys with strings that are more than 12 inches in length. They could be a strangulation hazard for babies.

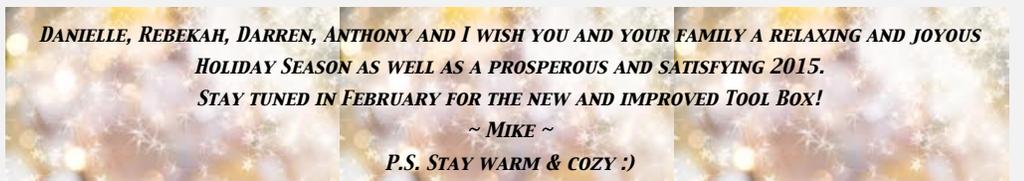
Outdoor Play

- Make sure your child's gloves and shoes stay dry. If either becomes wet, change your child into a dry pair.
- Sledding on or into the roadway should be prohibited. Look for shallow slopes that are free of obstacles, such as trees and fences.
- Most skiing and skating injuries involve twists, sprains and strains. Prevent injuries by providing your child with competent instruction, proper equipment and appropriate supervision.

Happy Visiting

- Clean up immediately after a holiday party. A toddler could rise early and choke on leftover food or come in contact with alcohol or tobacco.
- Remember that the homes you visit may not be childproofed. Keep an eye out for danger spots.
- Keep a laminated list with all of the important phone numbers you or a baby-sitter are likely to need in case of an emergency. Include the police and fire department, your pediatrician and the national Poison Help Line, 1-800-222-1222.

Lights, decorations and toys are a wonderful part of the holidays. But if you have young children, you need to take special precautions to make sure they're safe. Please follow these expert tips to ensure that your family's holiday season is happy, healthy and hazard-free





10 Tips For Baking Perfect Holiday Cookies

Split the dough: Work with half of the cookie dough at a time when rolling and cutting cookies. Too much handling of the dough makes cookies tough. Keep the other half refrigerated. Chilled dough is easier to handle.

Choose baking sheets wisely: Bake cookies on shiny, heavy aluminum baking sheets. These sheets with no sides are designed for easily sliding cookies onto a cooling rack. Dark sheets may absorb heat, causing cookies to brown too much on the bottom; nonstick baking sheets work well if not too dark. Insulated baking sheets require a slightly longer baking time.

Know how to grease: Grease baking sheets with cooking spray or solid shortening instead of butter or margarine. Avoid using tub butter or margarine products labeled as spread, reduced calorie, liquid, or soft-style. These contain

less fat than regular butter or margarine and do not give satisfactory results.

Purchase parchment paper: Use parchment paper to eliminate the need for greasing baking sheets. It also promotes even browning.

Don't overload the oven: Bake one sheet of cookies at a time on the middle oven rack; if you need to bake more than one at a time, rotate the sheets from the top rack to the bottom rack halfway through baking to encourage even browning.

Make a better bar: To make brownies and bar cookies, line a baking pan with heavy-duty aluminum foil; allow several inches to extend over the sides. Lightly grease the foil. Spread the batter evenly in the pan; bake and cool. Lift from the pan, using edges of the foil. Press down the foil sides; cut cookies into the desired size and shape with a dough scraper (available at kitchen-supply stores).

Be careful with over baking: Check cookies for doneness at the minimum baking time.

Use cooled baking sheets: Cool baking sheets between batches before reusing; wipe the surface of each with a paper towel.

Use a cooling rack: Short on cooling racks? Place a sheet of wax paper on the counter and sprinkle it with sugar. Cookies will cool without getting soggy.

Cool before storing: Cool cookies completely before storing them in airtight containers.



Basic Sugar Cookie Recipe

Ingredients

- 2 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for rolling
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, room temperature
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Assorted candies, sprinkles, or colored sugars, for decorating (optional)

Directions

1. In large bowl, whisk flour, baking powder, and salt. With an electric mixer, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in egg and vanilla. With mixer on low, gradually add flour mixture; beat until combined. Divide dough in half; flatten into disks. Wrap each in plastic; freeze until firm, at least 20 minutes, or place in a resealable plastic bag, and freeze up to 3 months (thaw in refrigerator overnight).
2. Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Line baking sheets with parchment. Remove one dough disk; let stand 5 to 10 minutes. Roll out 1/8 inch thick between two sheets of floured parchment, dusting dough with flour as needed. Cut shapes with cookie cutters. Using a spatula, transfer to prepared baking sheets. (If dough gets soft, chill 10 minutes.) Reroll scraps; cut shapes. Repeat with remaining dough.
3. Bake, rotating halfway through, until edges are golden, 10 to 18 minutes (depending on size). Cool completely on wire racks. To ice cookies, spread with the back of a spoon. Let the icing harden, about 20 minutes. Decorate as desired.



Recap of Mike Forner's Home Services 2014...

*Check out our new Mike Forner's Home Services Website: mikefornerhomeservices.com

*Khloe (Mike's second Yorkie poo) was added to the family this spring. She's golden colored, has exceptional leaping abilities & a ferocious desire to chew on everything :)

*Mike & a friend in the construction business went on a motorcycle trip in early October out west where they visited Nevada, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico & Utah.

*We completed many interesting jobs for some very wonderful people. Thanks to all our new & existing customers!

Did You Know...

That Radon can move into your house through cracks in the foundation or basement floor? It is the second leading cause of lung cancer, so it's important to mitigate it if it's found in your home. Sealing cracks in the foundation and floor is one step you can take yourself; other solutions may depend on your home's foundation.



Wise Home Owner Tip:

9 Tips For Shoveling Snow Efficiently

1. Stretch first: Don't be in a hurry to get outside. Stretch thoroughly using the same sorts of moves that runners, mountain bikers and other athletes use. Stretch your hamstrings, stretch your back, and stretch your shoulders. Then dress in removable layers, grab your shovel and resist the urge to fly at the white stuff just to get the job done. Pace yourself. Start slowly and ramp up to speed.

2. Don't move snow twice: Before you even take your first scoop, decide where you're going to dump the snow. Drop the first shovelful farther away from where you are standing, then dump remaining snow closer and closer to where you are. That way, the last scoops that you shovel are moved the shortest distance. Don't block access to snow that needs to be removed by piling it up in a way that will force you to move it twice.

3. Move snow the shortest distance possible: Consider that everything from a driveway to a patio to a walkway is really a rectangle, and rectangles have a center point. Move the snow from the center of the rectangle to the nearest edge.

4. Clear cars first: Brush snow off cars then clear around the cars.

5. Do the foreground then the background: For example, to clear snow from a rectangle, first shovel a strip clear along the perimeter of the rectangle. Then, moving from the center to the edge, push the snow into the cleared area. Next, lift and throw the snow out of the area.

6. Maintain proper posture:

- A. Use your leg muscles as much as possible - push snow when you can and use your legs to lift when you can't push it.
- B. Keep your back straight as you move from the squat position to the upright position.
- C. Use your shoulder muscles as much as possible.
- D. Hold the snow shovel as close to your upper body as possible.
- E. Keep one hand close to the shovel blade for better leverage.
- F. Don't twist your upper body as you throw snow.

7. Whenever possible, get a head start: It's easier to remove snow in thin layers than wait until all the snow is down to have at it. If it looks like your area is going to get dumped on, try to get out there and shovel it in several passes.

8. Maintain your equipment: The front edge of a snow shovel takes a beating. If it's metal, hammer it straight when it gets bent; if it's plastic use a utility knife to carve off the burr that forms on its end. Tighten a loose handle by driving a large hex head sheet metal screw through the blade socket and into the handle.

9. Stretch when you're done: Stretch gently when you're done and use an ice pack and ibuprofen to take care of inflamed muscles. Rest and remain hydrated.

Please don't hesitate to contact us at:

P: (734) 340-3688

F: (734) 527-6061

Email: mike@mikefornerhomeservices.com