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5 SIMPLE STEPS FOR HOLIDAY HOME SAFETY

HIGH POINT, N.C – Looking forward to family meals, holiday parties and out-of-town guests this holiday season? As you prepare your home for festivities, take these five important steps recommended by the American Home Furnishings Alliance to minimize the risk of seasonal dangers like fires and accidents, especially in homes with small children.

1. Check the Jingle Bells.

December is a good month to check all smoke detectors. You should have one in every bedroom and on each floor. The majority of people who die in residential fires in the U.S. today live in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

2. A Candle in the Window.

Whether you celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah or Kwanza, candles shine brightly throughout the holiday season. However, if you have candles in the windows, make sure they're the battery-operated variety. As a fire prevention measure, always position candles at least a foot away from anything flammable like draperies, upholstered furniture, trees, festive greenery or decorations. (NFPA reports one-third of home decoration fires are started by candles!) Don't leave youngsters unattended in rooms where candles are burning, and be sure to extinguish all candles when you leave the room or go to bed.

3. Deck the Walls.

Before you hang wreaths and garlands, deck your walls with any necessary tip restraints. If you have young children or expect any as visitors over the holidays, remember that dressers, chests and bookcases all pose tip-over hazards when not anchored. Don't place candy or gifts on top of furniture where children can see but not reach. Most furniture tip-over accidents involve children attempting to climb the furniture.

4. There's No Place Like Home for the Holidays ... and the TV Specials

Of course, the season wouldn't be complete without cozying up with loved ones to watch those treasured holiday TV classics. Before your sofa is full of family and guests, however, spend a few minutes taking a TV audit. Make sure all TVs are placed on sturdy furniture designed to

accommodate their size and weight. Large, flat-panel TVs are safest when wall-mounted. They are especially prone to tipping when furniture is bumped or moved, which can happen easily with extra guests in your home. Anchor them to the wall or to the furniture if wall-mounting is not possible. Never place unanchored TVs in children's rooms.

5. No Lords 'a Leaping

If there are bunk beds in your home, remind overnight guests not to jump on (or off) the top bunk or the ladder. Be aware that furniture manufacturers, along with the Consumer Product Safety Commission, do not recommend bunk beds for children younger than six.

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The American Home Furnishings Alliance, based in High Point, N.C., represents more than 230 leading furniture manufacturers and distributors, plus about 150 suppliers to the furniture industry worldwide.