

HOLIDAY FUN, HOLIDAY STRESS, HOLIDAY ACCIDENTS

All year long you've heard messages that remind you to "work safely...don't take short-cuts... prevent accidents..." To do this, of course, you have to keep your mind on your work. But this time of the year, your mind may be everywhere else but on your work. You may be thinking....

What will I buy everyone for Christmas-I hate shopping! How will I pay for Christmas-it costs a fortune! Traffic is so bad I'm a wreck every time I get where I'm going. My relatives and their kids are going to be here for a whole week-lord help me! My kids' energy levels and voice levels have quadrupled-give me peace! If I hear Alvin & The Chipmunks one more time, I'll smash the radio!

The holidays are a wonderful time for some people and a dreadful time for others. For many, it's a mixture. The experts tell us that even happy, exciting events are stressful to our minds and our bodies.

Normal routines and schedules are disrupted, which can feel uncomfortable. With so much to do, there's a lot of rushing around to get it done. Giving presents can be stressful-"Am I giving enough...am I giving too much...?" Stores and malls during the holidays are crowded and chaotic. Holiday gatherings can be fun, but too much food and drink can take it's toll. "Ghosts of Christmas Past" can remind us of disappointments and bring on depression.

Be aware that you may be more likely to have an accident at this time of the year--on the job, at home or on the road. At work, you may be distracted by personal matters or financial concerns and overlook safe work practices. At home, tension between family members are sometimes high, since they too are feeling both the good and bad holiday stress. Out-of-sort people tend to be accident prone.

You may also find yourself taking extra physical risks-hanging colored lights on the roof, lugging a Christmas tree around, or shoveling snow. And when roads and freeways are jammed with frustrated drivers, the number of auto accidents increases. It's a time to drive defensively.

Sometimes, the worst thing about Christmas is getting there! Once it arrives, it's lots of fun--so don't have an accident on the way! If you keep in mind that the holidays put extra pressure on everyone this time of the year, it may help keep you and your loved ones accident-free.

Stay alert. Take extra care. Have a safe and happy holiday!