

BOWA Offers Home Safety Tips During the Holidays

McLean, Va. — BOWA (www.bowa.com), a home transformation company specializing in the design and construction of large-scale additions and renovations, offers a series of safety tips to keep your home festive – yet safe – during the holiday season.

“According to the National Fire Protection Association, more than 40 percent of home fires occur during the months of December, January and February,” said Josh Baker, president of BOWA. “During this time of holiday cheer, we must be mindful to protect our families from fire hazards that may result from candles, trees and other decorative items.”

BOWA offers the following safety considerations for these popular holiday decorations:

- **Christmas Trees:** It is estimated that about 600 fires a year are started by the ignition of Christmas trees. As such, care should be taken when selecting a fresh tree. The needles should be green, hard to pull back from the branches, and should not break when bent between two fingers. Another way to test the freshness of a tree is by tapping the base on the ground. If too many needles fall off, it means the tree is too dry and can create a fire hazard. After selecting your tree, cut a few inches off the trunk to expose fresh wood and help ensure better water absorption. Once in place, it is important to keep the tree stand filled with water at all times. If purchasing an artificial tree, look for one labeled “Fire Resistant.” Then, whether you choose to place your tree in your living room, family room or another room, make sure it is at least three feet away from fireplaces, radiators and portable heaters.

- **Menorahs and other Holiday Candles:** If you celebrate Hanukkah, choose a menorah that’s sturdy and made of fire-safe materials. A menorah should not be placed in closed areas such as between bookshelves. If you wish to display your menorah in the window, ensure that curtains and draperies are far away from the candles’ flames. You can place aluminum foil, a ceramic dish or other non-flammable material under the menorah to catch hot wax or to prevent a fire from starting should one of the candles fall over. Consider using battery-operated

candles instead of traditional candles. However, if you can’t pass up the ambiance of traditional candles, never leave an open flame unattended and keep lighted candles away from combustible material. Ensure that all candles are extinguished before going to bed, leaving children unattended or departing your home.

- **Electrical Decorative Items:**

When decorating your home, be sure all of your electrical items and extensions cords have been approved by a nationally recognized testing laboratory, such as the Underwriters Laboratory (UL). Remember to inspect and test your lights each year before using them. On any type of electrical decoration, it is important to check for cracked or frayed sockets, loose connections, and loose or bare wires, all of which can cause serious shocks or start a fire. Always unplug electrical decorations before replacing any bulbs or fuses, and remember to turn off both indoor and outdoor electrical decorations before going to bed or leaving the house. If using an extension cord for your holiday decorating, select one that is long enough to meet your needs, since it is not advisable to extend the length of an extension cord by connecting one to another. Ensure that the cord is rated for the products that will be plugged into it, and that it is appropriately marked for either indoor or outdoor use. Outdoor extension cords and light strands should be kept clear of snow and standing water. Also, be sure not to place extension cords in high traffic areas, under carpets, or across walkways, which can cause wear and create tripping hazards. Lastly, cover any unused outlets on the cord to prevent children from making contact with a live circuit.

See **BOWA**, Page 4

Additionally, homeowners should adhere to proper servicing schedules, maintenance



recommendations, and safety precautions for fireplaces. Whether you have a gas or wood-burning fireplace, a regular schedule of service and maintenance is highly recommended. Wood-burning fireplace flues should be cleaned at least once every two years — more depending on usage. An annual chimney inspection is also recommended, where an inspector will thoroughly review the condition of the caps and mesh, crown, flashing, bricks and masonry, liners, and ducts. Also, ensure that overhanging branches are cut back at least 10 feet from the chimney opening to prevent them from catching fire, as well as prevent any obstruction to the flow of smoke. With both vented-gas and wood-burning fireplaces, make sure the damper is open before lighting a fire. A closed damper would cause the smoke or carbon monoxide to back up into the room, which can be both dangerous and damaging. If you have a gas fireplace, remember that the pilot light is an active flame that is burning in the unit at all times. Therefore, it is suggested that you turn off the pilot light before using flammable materials in the vicinity.

About BOWA

BOWA transforms houses into homes™ through the design and construction of large-scale, luxury renovations and additions. From the very beginning, BOWA provides the single point of accountability for its customers, guiding, executing, and managing their design, construction, and client experience. Drawing on a tradition of excellence for over 20 years, BOWA's professionals have found that complex projects require input from numerous experts. Having one party that assembles and manages the team, takes accountability for the entire process and looks after the client's best interests is the key to having a world-class

remodeling experience. BOWA has been honored with more than 100 local and national awards of excellence, including being named National Remodeler of the Year by Professional Remodeler Magazine and largest Whole House Remodeler by Qualified Remodeler Magazine. With offices in McLean and Middleburg, Virginia, BOWA serves clients in Suburban Maryland, the District of Columbia and Northern Virginia. For more information, visit www.bowa.com or call 703-734-9050.



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Follow these simple safety tips to ensure a happy holiday.