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CHRISTMAS - ‘TIS THE SEASON FOR INCREASED INJURIES

The AMA is reminding everyone to stay safe this festive season by avoiding common Christmas hazards.

AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said today that every year thousands of Australians end up in the emergency departments due to Christmas-related injuries.

“Presentations to emergency departments from preventable accidents spike during the Christmas-New Year period,” Dr Bartone said.

“The festive period is a time of year when people tend to participate in more leisure and sporting activities, consume more alcohol, and take more risks than they normally would.

“When preparing for the holiday season, take extra care, make smart choices, and keep a lookout for common Christmas hazards.

“Injuries from Christmas trees, electrical lights, food poisoning, alcohol consumption, and even champagne corks can land you in the emergency room.

“Statistics from recent years show some of the possible hidden dangers at this time of year.

“For example, on New Years’ Day 2018/19, NSW Health reported that almost 10,000 patients were treated in State Emergency Departments, with 2000 individuals brought in by ambulance.”

Top tips to avoid a trip to the emergency department this festive season:

- If using a ladder, make sure another adult is assisting you for safety and that you are not under the influence of alcohol.
- Keep small ornaments out of reach of small children and look out for broken cords or loose bulbs on your decorative lights.
- Prepare and store foods properly: don’t leave food in the heat and keep leftovers in the fridge for only a few days.
- Before you pop the bubbly, expect the unexpected look around, remember to hold the cork down when removing the wire, use a towel, and keep the bottle at a 45-degree angle away from yourself and others.
- Make sure you have scripts for regular medication filled before the festive break.

Dr Bartone also reminded holidaymakers to keep emergency departments for emergencies.

“Many GP clinics are open over the Christmas-New Year break, so there is no need for people with minor injuries to go to Emergency Departments,” Dr Bartone said.

“Check the opening hours of your local GP clinics, and have a plan in place if you or one of your loved ones is injured over the festive break.”

Background

While data in Australia is limited, a study released in the USA last year found that:

- Christmas tree stands/supports injured 2839 people.
- Christmas decorations are the most dangerous part of the holiday season - 31,855 injuries were attributed to tree lights, 36,054 to electrical decorations, and 80,208 Americans were injured by non-electrical decorations.
- Christmas presents caused 2305 injuries.
- Artificial Christmas trees accounted for 17,928 injuries, with real trees proving to be a safer option, causing only 2216 injuries.
- 277 children were injured involving Santa impersonators, injuries sustained mostly from falling off Santa's lap.

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