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Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Energy bills can increase during winter for a variety of reasons, like houseguests, more time spent at home, and shorter days and longer nights. Small actions, like turning down your thermostat, replacing old bulbs with LEDs and washing clothes in cold water can help you save.



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Are You Ready for Winter?

Tips to keep families safe this winter

NC Insurance Commissioner Mike Causey, who is also the State Fire Marshal, urges families to make preparations now for potentially dangerous weather this winter.

"Winter is a time that brings families together in celebration of the holidays. But that also means more cooking, more traveling and more risk of fire and other accidents," said Commissioner Causey. "This winter, it is so important for families to keep safety in mind."

WINTER TRAVEL Winter weather can bring a combination of potentially life-threatening conditions including sleet, snow and ice that can cause road conditions to quickly deteriorate. Since road injuries are the leading cause of preventable deaths and injury free:

- Drive slowly. It's harder to control or stop your vehicle on an ice or snow-covered roadway.
- Increase your following distance so that you'll have plenty of time to stop for vehicles ahead of you.
- Always wear your seat belt and ensure that everyone else in your vehicle is buckled up.
- Know whether your vehicle has an anti-lock brake system. Anti-lock brake systems prevent your wheels from locking up during braking. If you have anti-lock brakes, apply firm, continuous pressure to the brake pedal. If you don't have anti-lock brakes, you may need to pump the brakes if your wheels start to lock up.
- Check your car seat before holiday travel.
- Use booster seats.
- Bulky coats and car seats don't mix.

FALLS Weather in North Carolina can be very unpredictable, especially during the winter months. In the event of snowy or icy conditions, Commissioner Causey also wants to remind the public about the seriousness of falls and ways to reduce fall risk.

According to estimates by the North Carolina Injury and Violence Prevention Branch of the North Carolina Division of Public Health, falls are the leading cause of injury related emergency department visits for older adults and are responsible for more than half of fatal head injuries.

- Please remember these steps to reduce falls:
- Take your time. Get up slowly and get your balance before walking.
 - Keep stairs and walking areas free of clutter.
 - Use non-slip mats on your bathroom floor and showers.
 - Be aware of uneven surfaces like rugs and uneven sidewalks.
 - Be careful on stairs. Use the handrails and make sure they are well lit.

HEATING During the winter season, staying warm and safe can be a challenge. Each year during the winter months, there is an increase in the number of home fires related to the various forms of heating. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), heating is the leading cause of fires in U.S. homes.

- Please remember these tips to prevent house fires:
- Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from heating equipment.
 - Have a three-foot "kid-free zone" around open fires and space heaters.
 - Never use your oven to heat your home.
 - Remember to turn portable heaters off when leaving the room or going to bed.
 - Test smoke alarms at least once a month.

To learn more about fire and holiday safety, visit the OSFM website, ncosfm.gov.

Better Business Bureau Offers Tips for Holiday Returns and Exchanges

Holiday returns aren't easy! And we don't mean the part where you explain to your mother why you returned the sweater she gave you. Stores are not legally required to accept exchanges or give refunds, unless the merchandise was defective or misrepresented. While most retailers do offer refund and exchange programs as a courtesy to their customers, policies vary greatly from one store to another. Add to the mix warranties, which are usually fulfilled by the manufacturer, and holiday returns can get confusing. The following tips should help to make your holiday returns run more smoothly.

- **Get to know store policies.** Before you make a purchase, find out if the store has a return policy and, if so, how it works. Understand that policies can change during the holiday season and may not apply to sale items. If the store does allow returns or exchanges, find out if you will need to pay a restock fee. Ask the seller if they offer cash refunds, exchanges, or only store credit. Store policies are usually posted at the check-out counter or printed on the back of receipts.
- **Understand online store return policies.** If you are shopping online, search for the seller's return policy and read it through before clicking "buy." Find out if they accept returns or exchanges, and who pays the shipping when an item is returned. In some cases, you can save on shipping fees by returning an online purchase to the local brick- and-mortar store.
- **Get the details on a product's warranty.** Most electronics and home appliances come with warranties that are to be fulfilled with the manufacturer, not the retailer. Find out how returns and repairs are handled if an item stops working or needs replacement parts. Will the retailer ship the item to the manufacturer for you? Or will you need to deal with the manufacturer directly? Knowing the answers will leave you well-prepared for any future issues.
- **Keep your receipt and packaging.** Most stores will only accept returns and exchanges if you can present the item with its receipt and original packaging. Always include a gift receipt with items you give and hold on to any gift receipts you receive.
- **Bring your ID.** To avoid holiday return scams, many stores ask to see your ID when you return an item. Sometimes retailers require you bring your ID and the original form of payment. If this is the policy of the store where your gift is from, you may need the assistance of the gift giver in order to be reimbursed.
- **Make returns in a timely fashion.** Almost all return policies are valid during a specific time period. Some stores modify their return period during the holidays, so don't risk missing your chance to make your return. Take the item back to the store without delay.

* All events are subject to change because of the COVID-19 situation. You may want to seek confirmation of events.

Church News

ONGOING HOPE Grief Support Group at Harmony Community Church, meets Tuesdays at 6:30pm offering help for those feeling grief or loss. Free & confidential. Info & register 704-272-7127 or 704-242-2499. Located at 1984 Pulpwood Yard Rd in Peachland

Service Times Wadesboro Church of God. Sunday School 10am, morning worship 11am, Intercessory prayer 5:45pm, evening service 6pm

Events

JANUARY 6 Free Groceries For families in need Mobile Food Pantry at Austin Grove Baptist Church, located at 5919 Austin Grove Church Road in Marshville. Register 8-10am. Call for details 704-694-2445

ONGOING EVENTS Food Commodities Food Distributed Free every Wednesday at 9am & 2nd Saturday of each month at 9am at Burnsville Recreation & Learning Ctr, Hwy 742N across from Burnsville Fire Dept. Info 704-826-8182

Food Pantry Free food every Wed, 9-11am at Burnsville Recreation & Learning Ctr. 704-826-8182

Free Food Distributed by Anson Crisis Ministries Every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday, 8am-1pm. It is located at 117 North Rutherford Street in uptown Wadesboro. Telephone is 704-694-2445

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110 Ashe Street
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