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The best gift this year? A safe holiday season

ST. PAUL, MINN. (December 11, 2018) -- The holiday season brings fun and festivities with family and friends, but it also means an increased risk of injury.

“At this time of the year, we’re all rushing around, adding events and to-do items to our busy days, and changing our routines,” says Paul Aasen, president of the Minnesota Safety Council. “It’s easy to get distracted and that puts us at greater risk on the road, in our homes and in the homes of those we visit.”

“Slowing down a bit, taking a second look, and remembering everyone is in a rush goes a long way to keeping ourselves, our loved ones and those around us safe this holiday season.”

Children can be especially vulnerable during this season when they’re out of their normal environment and schedules vary, says Erin Petersen, coordinator of Safe Kids Minnesota, which is led by the safety council. Common risks for kids include poisoning, falls and choking.

Unintentional injuries, such as falls, traffic crashes and poisonings, are a leading cause of death in Minnesota. To make this season safe, the Minnesota Safety Council and Safe Kids Minnesota recommend:

Behind the wheel:

- Buckle up and plan ahead for a designated driver when you’re out celebrating.
- Avoid distracted driving. Put down that phone, food and other items that require your attention. Keep your eyes on the road, your hands on the wheel and your mind on driving.
- Be extra cautious in packed parking lots full of holiday-focused drivers.
- Slow down and increase your following distance, especially when roads are slick or icy.

At home:

- Make sure you have working smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.
- Keep candles away from anything that can burn. Don’t leave the kitchen while cooking on the stovetop.
- Be extra careful on ladders; keep both indoor and outdoor steps and walkways clear and clutter-free.

For kids:

- Safeguard all medications (including those belonging to guests), vitamins, cleaning solutions and laundry packets out of reach and sight of children.
- Follow recommended age levels when selecting toys; keep small parts and choking hazards away from children.
- Giving a bike, scooter or other riding toy? Include a helmet.

The Minnesota Safety Council is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to preventing injuries on the road, at work, at home and in the community. For more information, visit www.minnesotasafetycouncil.org.

Safe Kids Minnesota works to prevent unintentional childhood injury, the leading cause of death for children and teens. It is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing unintentional injury. Safe Kids Minnesota was founded in 1998 and is led by the Minnesota Safety Council. Learn more at www.minnesotasafetycouncil.org/safekids