

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Contact:** Robyn Thaw (650) 573-3935

San Mateo County Health System

## **Protect Your Family from Post-Holiday Dangers**

**SAN MATEO, Calif.** – Cold weather, dry trees and hot stoves can make the holiday season especially hazardous. Doctors from San Mateo Medical Center say many accidents and injuries can be avoided this time of year by taking a few simple steps to prevent house fires, burns and other injuries.

“Prevention is the best strategy to keep our patients safe from the accidental fires and carbon monoxide poisoning that often occur during the holiday season,” said SMMC pediatrician Neel Patel. “In our clinics, we routinely discuss preventive measures. We prevent life-threatening illnesses with vaccinations, and we feel it is equally important to prevent life-threatening accidents with safety recommendations.”

Public hospitals and emergency rooms often see a spike in fire- and heat-related injuries caused by space heaters, candles, live Christmas trees and fires. Heating equipment is the leading cause of home fires, and space heaters are responsible for about two-thirds of home heating fire deaths. Candles are the second-leading cause of home fire. Many of these injuries can be avoided by taking safety precautions.

### **A few fire safety tips from California Association of Public Hospitals and the California State Firefighters’ Association:**

- Place space heaters and candles in a safe location, away from flammable materials and surfaces
- Get rid of dead holiday trees as quickly as possible. Although lit Christmas trees present serious fire hazards, fire officials say the dangers of live Christmas trees usually come after the holiday, when the tree becomes dried out and more prone to fire.
- Avoid leaving hot liquids on the stove or counter, and protect children from stove burners, gas heaters, fireplaces and lit candles.
- Heat your home safely. Carbon monoxide poisoning, which is known as a silent killer because it cannot be seen or smelled, becomes a danger in winter as many people try to heat their homes using unsafe means. Always check to make sure gas heaters are properly ventilated and to never use gas ranges, ovens or barbeque grills to heat your home.
- Test your smoke alarms monthly. Your home should have smoke alarms installed on every level. Be sure to keep them clean and equipped with fresh batteries at all times.

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