



TIS THE SEASON TO BE JOLLY: A MESSAGE FROM CONSUMER AGENCIES IN CARICOM

Dear Consumers,

Christmas is upon us once again. It is the time of glad tidings and cheer but it is also the season to be especially vigilant. Consumers are encouraged to not only be wise but to be safe. Consumer Affairs Agencies in the CSME have come together to compile a few tips to assist you during the holidays:



Make a budget and stick to it. Planned expenditure is also a good way to keep track of your spending and to avoid unwanted purchases;



Do not over-extend yourself financially. If you are applying for a loan, only ask for what is necessary and what you can afford to repay given your salary and other commitments;



Make a list and check it twice. This helps you to prioritize and to separate your needs from your wants;



Be wary of advertisements or deals that seem too good to be true since they usually are. These may be false or misleading and are designed to negatively influence your decisions;



Shop around and compare prices and quality. This allows you to make the best informed purchasing decisions;



Check your bags to ensure that you have received all of the items you have purchased. If you have purchased items that require assembly, you should also check each individual package to ensure that you receive all of the necessary parts;



Ask as many questions as needed to inform your decision making. Especially as it relates to electrical appliances, ask about the required



voltage e.g. whether it is 110V or 220V and the need for a transformer;



Ensure you receive and safeguard your receipt. It is your proof that you purchased the item from the store should the item be later found to be defective and you need to return that item;



Always enquire about warranties and after sales service. This will help you determine whether you should purchase anything from that business or choose to go somewhere else;



Always read contracts carefully before signing. Stating that you were unaware of a term after a contract has been signed does not release you from your responsibilities under the contract. Only if the term is deemed to be unfair by law are you released from your contractual responsibilities;

Christmas is not all about shopping and we need to remember to be safe during the holidays. Here are a few tips to help you be safe:



Candles are always a nice way to enhance any ambience but they can also be very dangerous if left unmonitored. Therefore, do not go to bed and leave candles lit; do not place candles within the reach of children; or where they can topple or come into contact with paper, fabric or any other flammable materials. In the same vein, never leave children alone with matches.



Christmas is always a busy time for thieves. Therefore be vigilant and mindful about broadcasting your purchases as this can serve as an invitation to treat for unscrupulous individuals;



Keep your bag closed at all times. Always count your change and check that the paper currency received has the necessary security features. Be very vigilant as the hustle and bustle of this season makes it easy to circulate counterfeit money;



Do not overload electrical sockets or extension cords, especially with appliances with more wattage than the extension cord or socket can handle; do not use damaged or frayed extension cords since they can cause fires or serious shock; choose the right extension cord for its purpose – there are specific extension cords for indoor and outdoor use;



Be mindful of buying age-appropriate toys. Toys with small removal parts can be a choking hazard for small children;



While Christmas is a very busy time, it is important that you read all labels and instructions carefully before using the goods. It is also very important that you use them as directed;



A decorated Christmas tree always makes the home feel festive. However, there are a few mistakes we should never make when decorating the tree. Never leave the lights plugged in when going to bed; when buying an artificial tree always look for the label “Fire Resistant”; take



special care to avoid sharp, weighted or breakable decorations;

**Let's make this a happy and safe
Christmas!**

