

Solutions for a Sustainable Future.

Traditions: Dear Mr. Comfort is Santa Sustainable

The party was done. Cousins, family members that are seen only at this time of year a distant memory, you ride home in the back of the car, your cheeks a little flushed from pinching, grandma's leftover lipstick adding to their rosy hue. The fatigue of the night is being fought off by the adrenaline of what is to come in the morning. You are sure, all the right hints were given, all the letters to Santa addressed and mailed. This is the year. Every inch of you knows you will get that special gift. As sleep overtakes you, your sagging eyes vaguely spot a red light blinking in the far distance. "Rudolph" you hear your father say, as dreams creep in. This is the year.



Santa Claus, also known as Saint Nicholas, Father Christmas, Kris Kringle, or simply "Santa", is a legendary figure who, in many Western cultures, is said to bring gifts to the homes of the good children during the late evening and overnight hours of Christmas Eve, December 24. The legend was derived from the Dutch figure of Sinterklaas, which, in turn, may have part of its basis in hagiographical tales concerning the historical figure of gift giver Saint Nicholas.

Santa Claus is generally depicted as a plump, jolly, white-bearded man wearing a red coat with white collar and cuffs, white-cuffed red trousers, and black leather belt and boots. This image became popular in the United States and Canada in the 19th century due to the significant influence of caricaturist and political cartoonist Thomas Nast. This image has been maintained and reinforced through song, radio, television, children's books and films.

A well-known folk legend associated with Santa Claus says that he lives in the far north, in a land of perpetual snow. The American version of Santa Claus says that he lives at his house on the North Pole. Santa Claus lives with his wife Mrs. Claus, an unspecified but large number of magical elves, and at least eight or nine (depending on whether or not Rudolph is counted) flying reindeer.

Factoid: The original reindeer were named Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Dunder and Blixem. (Dunder and Blixem were later changed to Donner and Blitzen). "But do you recall the most famous reindeer of all" sorry I wax nostalgic.

Santa Claus makes a list of children throughout the world, categorizing them according to their behavior ("naughty" or "nice") and that he delivers presents, including toys, candy, and other gifts to all of the good boys and girls in the world, and sometimes coal to the naughty children, on the single night of Christmas Eve. He accomplishes this feat with the aid of the elves who make the toys in the workshop and the reindeer who pull his sleigh.

Factoid: In Washington Irving's *History of New York*, (1809), Sinterklaas was Americanized into "Santa Claus" and was immortalized by Thomas Nast with his illustration from January 3, 1863.



The tradition of Santa Claus entering dwellings through the chimney may reach back to the tale of Saint Nicholas tossing coins through a window, and, in a later version of the tale, tossing coins down a chimney when he finds the window locked. The hearth was held sacred in primitive belief as a source of beneficence, and popular belief had elves and fairies bringing gifts to the house through this portal. Santa's entrance into homes on Christmas Eve via the chimney was made part of American tradition through Moore's *A Visit from Saint Nicholas* (or as you may know it "The Night Before Christmas") where the author described him as an elf.

Writing letters to Santa Claus has been a Christmas tradition for children for many years. These letters normally contain a wish list of toys and assertions of good behavior.

Factoid: Scientists have found that boys and girls write different types of letters. Girls generally write longer but more polite lists and express the nature of Christmas more in their letters than in letters written by boys. Girls also more often request gifts for other people.

According to the Universal Postal Union study and survey of national postal operations, the United States Postal Service (USPS) has the oldest Santa letter answering effort by a national postal system. The USPS Santa letter answering effort started in 1912 and since

1940 has been called "Operation Santa" to ensure that letters to Santa are adopted by charitable organizations, major corporations, local businesses and individuals in order to make children's holiday dreams come true from coast to coast. Those seeking a North Pole holiday postmark through the USPS, are told to send their letter from Santa or a holiday greeting card by December 10 to: North Pole Holiday Postmark, Postmaster, 4141 Postmark Dr, Anchorage, AK 99530-9998.

Over the years there have been a number of websites created by various organizations to track Santa Claus using radar and other tracking technologies. The major Santa Tracker players are the NORAD Tracks Santa Program, which has become recognized as the "preeminent" Santa Tracking effort (as well as being the oldest, with a program start of December 24, 1955 and having a web presence since 1997)

Factoid: In 1955, a Sears Roebuck store in Colorado Springs, Colorado, gave children a number to call a "Santa hotline". The number was mistyped and children called the Continental Air Defense Command (CONAD) on Christmas Eve instead. The Director of Operations, Colonel Harry Shoup, received the first call for Santa and responded by telling children that there were signs on the radar that Santa was indeed heading south from the North Pole. In 1958, Canada and the United States jointly created the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD) and together tracked Santa Claus for children of North America that year and ever since. This tracking can now be done via the Internet and NORAD's website.

Santa Claus's home traditionally includes a residence and a workshop where he creates - often with the aid of elves - the gifts he delivers to good children at Christmas. Some stories and legends include a village, inhabited by his helpers, surrounding his home and shop.

In North American tradition (in the United States and Canada), Santa lives on the North Pole, which according to Canada Post lies within Canadian jurisdiction in postal code H0H 0H0. On December 23, 2008, Jason Kenney, Canada's minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, formally awarded Canadian citizenship status to Santa Claus. "*The Government of Canada wishes Santa the very best in his Christmas Eve duties and wants to let him know that, as a Canadian citizen, he has the automatic right to re-enter Canada once his trip around the world is complete,*" Kenney said in an official statement.

Traditions are a wonderful thing. It does not matter what religion or nationality it is our traditions that make us sustainable as a society. When an idea, act or event becomes a tradition it becomes locked into our conscious and becomes part of our lives and culture. So remember back over your lifetime and all the joy and memories your family traditions have brought to you. It is the authors hope that changing our society to a sustainable one will create traditions of their own in the future.

I am Jim Steigner (Santa Comfort), and I just wanted you to know that Santa is Sustainable. Merry Christmas to all and to all a good night. Happy Holidays to Everyone. As always you can contact me at www.mrcomforthvac.com, under the "ask Mr. Comfort" Section with any questions, concerns, thoughts or ideas. A special thanks to Bristol from LaGrange for her Question.