

HLS Health Care Facility Holiday Decorating Guidelines



Holiday decorating is a special tradition. But many decorations also create fire hazards. Did you know that December and January are traditionally the months with the highest number of fires? Putting fire safety first assures that the holiday spirit lasts until the holidays are over. Prevent tragedy by following these tips for fire safe decorating.

Inside Decorating –

- Natural cut trees, wreaths, branches, hay bales, etc. shall not be permitted
- Artificial Christmas trees must have the U.L. label stating flame retardant material.
- Place artificial trees at least 3 feet away from heat sources such as heat vents, fireplaces, and sunny windows.
- Use low heat output indoor electrical bulbs and make sure they do not make contact with combustible materials.
- Avoid over loading light strings. Do not connect more than 200 incandescent miniature lights or 50 large screw type bulbs together. You can safely connect 500 LED lights together. Small lights are safer because they produce less heat.
- Be sure all electrical items are in good condition and have U.L. labels. After purchase, and before decorating, check for damaged wiring or broken plugs. Plug them in for 15 minutes and check for excessive heat.
- Turn off and unplug all electrical items at night. Grasp the cord by the plug, never pull on the cord.
- No extension cords.
- Circuit breaker power strips are recommended for a safe electrical power source. Do not connect one power strip to another power strip.
- Electrical cords may not be routed through doorways of any type.
- Electrical cords cannot be placed under a rug or carpet.
- Avoid combustible decorations concentrated in a single area on a wall that will lead to rapid fire growth.
- Flame resistant materials:
 - *must not exceed 20% of the total area of walls and ceilings inside any room of a non-sprinklered facility.
 - *must not exceed 30% of the total area of walls and ceilings inside any room of a sprinklered facility.
 - *must not exceed 50% of the total walls and ceilings inside a resident's sleeping room, having a capacity of no more than 4 people in a sprinklered facility.
- Crepe paper and pyroxylin plastic decorations must be documented as being treated with fire retardant.
- No lit candles.
- No use of smoke generating machines.
- Avoid the use of spray applied artificial snow. This type of decoration may irritate lungs and will set off smoke detectors.
- Decorations and trees must not cover fire alarm devices (pull stations, smoke detectors, heat detectors, etc.), fire extinguishers, exit signs, exit doors, etc., or negate the purpose of these devices. Be sure all corridors and exits are clear and available for routine use.



- Do not hang decorations on light fixtures, smoke detectors, or sprinkler heads.
- Decorations on doors should not interfere with their function or cover the identification as the means of egress.

- Remember to be fire safe outside, as well as inside. A fire that starts close to a building can spread to the structure and threaten lives.

- **Outside Decorating -**
- Do not use indoor lights for outdoor decorating. A label on the box will tell you if they are safe to use outside. Ground fault interrupters (GFI) are required for exterior light displays.
- Limit the use of heavy duty extension cords.
- Be sure extension and light cords do not create a tripping hazard.
- Turn off and unplug all electrical items at night.
- Do not block the exit discharge with decorations.

- **General Safety -**
- Use ladders - not chairs, stepstools or boxes when installing decorations in high locations.
- Take decorations down after the holidays and dispose of them properly or store them in a safe place suitable for storage of combustible materials.



This may be copied for residents and their family members.