

# Environmental Health and Safety Guidance Document Decorating Safely

## Purpose:

When celebrating any event throughout the year, be sure to keep the festive decorations safe. Have fun and keep the following guidelines in mind. Should you use a holiday tree, there are additional guidelines to follow. If you have additional questions, EHS is here to assist with safety consultations.

## General Decorations:

**Must be non-combustible** to comply with fire code; those made of combustible material must be treated with a UL-listed (or similar accrediting body) fire retardant.

- **Location:** Do not place decorations on doors leading to building corridors or within the corridor itself. In addition, care should be taken not to block access to exits or create tripping hazards in walkways.
- **Lighting:** All decorative lighting should be UL-listed (or similar accrediting body) and of the type that does not produce heat. You should be able to hold a bulb between your fingers without discomfort for an indefinite period. Do not use staples to hang lighting.
- **Extension cords:** The temporary use of extension cords is usually unavoidable. However, never leave decorative lighting energized during non-office hours. Do not run extension cords from one room to another and never string cords across doorways or walkways.

Do not string cords together! If your decorative lighting is too far from an outlet for one extension cord to reach, move the decorations closer, or don't use them. Outdoor lights and energized decorations must be equipped with ground fault interrupters (GFIs).

- **Open flames:** use of open flame (e.g., candles, luminaria, incense) is prohibited.

## Holiday Trees:

- **Height:** Live or harvested trees should be less than five feet tall
- **Placement:** Common areas only (reception areas, meeting rooms, break rooms). Never place trees near exit doors, exit aisles or in corridors.
- **Separate from ignition sources:** Never place a tree near heaters, heat-producing appliances, lighting fixtures, televisions or computers.



# Environmental Health and Safety Guidance Document Decorating Safely

- **Flame retardant treatment** is required for indoor trees.  
A tag must be affixed to the tree when purchased stating the date of the sale, type of fire retardant used for treatment, the name of the person who applied the treatment and the name of the person affixing the tag.
- **A support device** must be used to hold the tree in a stable, upright position. These devices must:
  - Not damage or require the removal of the tree stem base.
  - Hold the tree securely and prevent it from tipping over.  
  
A minimum of six inches diameter is required for a one-foot tree, with two inches additional width for every foot over one foot of height. Wider bases are highly recommended.
  - Hold a minimum of one-half gallon of water, covering the tree stem at least two inches.
- **Watering:** Use hot tap water for the initial watering. The stand must never be allowed to run dry. If it does, the tree should be removed from the building.
- **Check for dryness:** Stand in front of a branch and grasp it near the trunk with reasonably firm pressure. Pull your hand toward you, allowing the branch to slip through your grasp. If needles fall off readily, the tree does not have adequate moisture content and should be removed from the building.
- **Non-combustible ornaments only:** Never use paper, cloth, or cardboard decorations.
- **Tree lights** must be non-heat producing type (mini lights or LED) that are UL-listed (or similar accrediting body). Do not use electric lights on metal trees; light them with companion spotlights only.

**Remove trees promptly after the holidays.**

