

**West Chester University**  
**Department of Environmental Health and Safety**

**Holiday Season Fire Safety Policy**

**Purpose**

To set forth the policy for use and prohibition of holiday decorations in university owned structures

**General**

During the holiday season, many individuals lose their lives due to senseless fires that could have been easily prevented. In order to minimize the potential life safety and fire hazards associated with the holiday season, the following fire safety policy is in effect to safeguard lives and to prevent fires in our campus community.

**Policy**

**1. GENERAL FIRE SAFETY REQUIREMENTS**

**a. OBSTRUCTIONS TO THE MEANS OF EGRESS**

The means of egress from each part of the building shall be kept clear of all obstructions including decorative obstructions at all times. This includes aisles, corridors, exit doors, exit stairways, exit passageways, and exit discharges.

**b. OBSTRUCTIONS TO FIRE ALARM SYSTEMS AND FIRE PROTECTION EQUIPMENT**

All holiday trees, decorations, and displays shall be located so as not to obstruct any exit signs, exit paths, fire alarm initiation and annunciation devices (manual pull stations, bells, horns, strobes, smoke and heat detectors); fire protection equipment including but not limited to fire extinguishers, sprinkler heads, fire equipment cabinets, standpipe connections and other types of fire equipment; and emergency and normal-use light fixtures.

**2. CUT HOLIDAY TREES AND EVERGREEN GARLAND**

**a. ALL BUILDINGS**

1. Cut holiday trees and evergreen garland are strictly prohibited in all buildings during the holiday season.

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3. ARTIFICIAL HOLIDAY TREES

- a. Artificial holiday trees are permitted within all floors of University buildings. Artificial trees shall be located a minimum distance of three (3) feet from all heating and electrical sources and a minimum of 18 inches from any sprinkler head.

4. OTHER HOLIDAY DECORATIONS

a. CANDLES AND OTHER OPEN FLAME DEVICES

1. A person shall not use or allow the use of, any open flame candle or candles for decorative purposes or ceremonies. Candles and all other open flame devices are strictly prohibited unless approved by the Fire Safety Specialist for a specific occasion.

b. OTHER COMBUSTIBLE MATERIALS

1. Hay bales, straw, corn stalks, and similar combustible materials are strictly prohibited from being displayed inside any campus building.

c. DECORATIVE MATERIALS

1. Decorative materials shall be constructed of non-combustible materials or treated with an approved flame-retardant agent by the manufacturer prior to being purchased. Combustible materials shall not be used unless the product carries a "flame retardant" UL (Underwriters Laboratories, Inc.) label.
2. Flammable and combustible decorative materials, such as bed sheets, cotton, and flammable plastics, shall not be used.
3. Wall decorations, including "flame resistant" crepe paper shall only be applied to non-combustible surfaces. Doors shall not be gift-wrapped.
4. Decorative materials shall not be applied inside corridors, exit stairways or on exit doors.

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5. Decorations including icicles and other ornaments shall not be attached to or suspended from heating pipes, electrical appliances, sprinkler heads or any other mechanical, electrical and fire protection equipment.
6. Metal decorations shall not be hung near electrical light bulbs, sockets, wall receptacles, or any metal parts of electrical appliances or equipment.
7. Please exercise caution with the use of spray applied artificial snow. This type of decoration can set off a smoke detector.
8. Paper decorations should not cover more than 25% of the surface area of any wall. For example, if the an office or resident hall room wall is 8 feet high by 10 feet long, the paper decorations should not cover more than 20 square feet of the wall area.

d. **ELECTRICAL DECORATIONS AND DEVICES**

1. Electrical decorations, devices and lights shall bear the UL (Underwriters Laboratories, Inc.) label. They shall only be used for either indoor or outdoor applications, as rated by UL.
2. Electrical decorations, devices and lights shall be inspected for defects and tested prior to being used. No electrical decorations, devices or lights shall be used if they have frayed cords, bare wires, loose connections, cracked or broken plugs or sockets.
3. Electrical decorations, devices and lights are prohibited from being attached to, or from coming in contact with, metallic holiday trees. An indirect lighting source, such as a color wheel, is acceptable for lighting these types of holiday trees.
4. Only miniature holiday light sets are permitted to be attached to, or come in contact with, non-metallic artificial holiday trees.
5. No electrical decorations, devices, or lights shall be left on in unoccupied areas or rooms. All decorative electrical lights and devices shall be turned off AND unplugged at the end of the workday and over weekends.
6. The following electrical devices are prohibited: Multiple adapters such as cube adapters, unfused plug strips, or any other device not complying with the National Electrical Code.

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7. Only one (1) temporary extension cord, not exceeding ten (10) feet in length, shall be authorized for use in each individual building area or room. Extension cords shall not be placed under carpet. Electrical outlets shall not be overloaded, and electrical devices such as fuse protected power strips shall not be plugged in to each other.

5. ASSISTANCE

- a. If there is any doubt regarding the selection or safe usage of holiday decorations, the Fire Safety Specialist, through the EHS Office, is available to provide advice and/or inspection of these materials.
- b. The Fire Safety Specialist reserves the right to approve or deny the use of any and all devices and decorations not directly mentioned in this policy after the appropriate inspection of such devices and decorations.
- c. The Fire Safety Specialist may be reached by dialing extension 2129.