

FACT SHEET



Holiday Decorations, Trees and Lights A Guide for Consumers

Beautiful decorations for special occasions are a Utah tradition, it is a part of our collective conscience to make things more appealing, attractive and pleasing to the eye. As seasonal decorations go up, it is important to understand that those very decorations lead to added fire risks if safety precautions are neglected or forgotten. Here are a few caring reminders to assist in making your holiday season, a season of joyful remembrance.

- Before the season begins, test the operation of each smoke detector in the space. Verify and change your smoke detector and carbon monoxide alarm batteries.
- Always use non-combustible decorative materials to decorate both outside and inside.
- There are a huge variety of lights, light strings and lighting systems available for decorations today. Always use "cool lamp" holiday lights, fixtures, wiring, extensions that have been approved by a nationally recognized testing laboratory as you decorate and brighten for the holidays or special occasions.
- Inspect the lighting fixture, lighting string or lighting system, even when new, before you begin to hang, drape or string lights for frayed or cracked bare wiring, broken sockets or plugs or empty sockets.
- Turn off decorative lighting when the space is vacant or you're away for a period of time.
- If fresh cut trees or branches are used for decorating applications, utilize a reservoir type tree stands or branch reservoirs and water daily.
- Make a fresh cut on the bottom of the tree or branch. Cut several times during the use. Remove when needles or branches become brittle.
- Break branch off to check for dryness, if brittle or if leaves or needles begin to drop off, do not hesitate, remove and dispose of the tree or branch.
- Do not use open flame, candles, incense or smoking materials near trees, garland or other decoration features. Wooden smokers do burn.
- Turn off holiday lighting prior to leaving the home or retiring.
- Safely dispose of natural trees or branches before it becomes dangerously dry.
- Never burn your tree or any part of the tree in the firebox or fireplace... ever!

Birthdays, Easter, Graduation, Weddings, Halloween, Thanksgiving or Christmas decorations are a part of the wonderful celebrations we share.

When decorating, setting chairs, backdrops or banners, remember not to block exit doors or impede exit access.

Decorations, pillars, columns, backdrops or gazebos should be secured so they will not tip over when bumped or jostled.

Damaged sets of lights, fixtures, wiring, spotlights should be discarded.

Floors should be kept clean and dry so as to protect from slipping and falls

State Requirements for Public Buildings

As we approach another Holiday season, we would like to remind you of the State requirements regarding Christmas trees in public buildings. The Division of Facilities Construction and Management and the Division of Risk Management along with the State Fire Marshal's Office encourages agencies NOT to purchase live Christmas trees to be placed in their work areas.

State-regulated public buildings include all places of assembly (50 or more occupants), school buildings (including all colleges and universities), all publicly owned buildings (city, county and state), hospitals, nursing homes, and all penal facilities.

Christmas trees or decorations shall not be placed in locations, which could obstruct exit-ways. When choosing a location, consider what could happen if the tree were toppled. Could an exit or corridor be blocked? It is recommended locations other than corridors and exit-ways be used.

Only fixtures, features, lights, wiring that have been listed by a nationally recognized testing laboratory, in good condition and without frayed wiring, loose connections, or broken sockets may be used. They must be used according to the manufactures instructions.

Do not gang or plug lights together beyond the manufacturers recommendations.

Extension cords and power strips should have built-in current overload protection and be (UL/FM listed). Extension cords and power strips should be plugged directly into the wall socket or a permanent wiring appliance.

Approved and listed power strips should be "Rated" for the power load required and should not be gang-connected or daisy-chained together. Extension cords power strips or surge protectors should not be overloaded beyond manufacturers recommendations.

Tree decorations shall be non-combustible or flame-retardant.

Candles and open flames devices are strictly prohibited.

Artificial trees shall be listed flame-retardant by a nationally recognized testing laboratory (Underwriters Laboratory or equivalent). Evidence of this listing shall be kept for review by fire authorities (packaging, labels, tags, etc.).

We appreciate your assistance in making this a most joyous and fire-safe season of celebration, whatever the celebration please stay safe.

If you have any questions, please contact the Utah State Fire Marshal's Office.