

Decorating for the Holidays Safely

The risk of fire increases during the holidays. Follow these tips to ensure you celebrate as safely as possible.

Christmas Trees

- Re-cut a natural tree trunk diagonally at least 25 mm above the original cut immediately before setting up the tree so it can absorb water. Natural trees require up to four litres of water per day. Use a stand that has a large water reservoir.
- Make sure a natural tree has a constant supply of water – check it daily to ensure it has not dried out. The tree is dry if the needles are brittle or if the needles fall or are easily pulled off. A dry tree is extremely flammable and should be removed from the building.
- Natural trees should not be kept in public buildings such as churches, halls, schools and offices longer than 10 days. A natural tree may dry out in less than 10 days, even if standing in water, and therefore should be checked daily to ensure it has not dried out. A dry tree must be removed from the building. The property owner is advised to replace a dried-out tree with a fresh tree if the decoration is still required.
- Artificial trees should have a flame resistant label from a recognized testing agency such as CSA or ULC.
- Place trees at least one metre away from all heat sources.
- Use a sturdy stand that will help prevent the tree from tipping over which would create an obstruction if you needed to evacuate the premises.
- Trees must be located so they will not block doors or escape routes from the building.
- The tree must not block exit signs, fire alarm stations, fire extinguishers, emergency lighting or other fire safety devices from view or use.

Decorative Lights

- All lighting must be labeled by a testing agency such as CSA or ULC.
- Replace lighting sets with worn or frayed cords or damaged bulb connections should be replaced.
- Make sure lighting is listed for indoor use and be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions for installation and maintenance.
- Unplug or turn off tree lighting when the building is unattended.
- Never use electric lights on metallic trees.
- When decorating outside, ensure lighting is labeled for outdoor use.

Other Decorations:

- All wall and ceiling decorations such as wall hangings and streamers must either be flame resistant or have the same flame-spread rating as required for the interior finish of the room in which they are located.
- Other decorations should be manufactured from flame-resistant material.
- There are no known chemicals to treat decorations to make them fire safe. The use of any treatment does not mean fire safety practices can be ignored.
- The use of spruce boughs, hay bales and other natural decorations is not recommended because they cannot be kept from drying out and becoming a serious fire hazard.
- Candles create extreme fire hazards and must never be used to decorate trees.
- All candles used elsewhere in a building should be used with extreme caution and never left unattended.