



UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON SYSTEM  
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Building Coordinators

FROM: Chris McDonald, Fire Marshal

DATE: November 21, 2016

SUBJECT: Christmas Decorations

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With winter weather and the holiday season rapidly approaching, Christmas decorations will be arriving on campus. The following are a number of guidelines to apply when decorating office/work areas:

- A. The top five days for candle fires are Halloween, Christmas, Christmas Eve, New Year's Day, and New Year's Eve. Please prohibit the use of open flames, such as candles (MAPP 06.03.01 Fire and Life Safety Code).
- B. Please ensure that decorations, tables, chairs, etc. do not block or obscure exits. This is particularly important during office or departmental gatherings.
  - 1. Decorations should be kept within the confines of the room. Paper decorations, lights and tinsel should not be strung across hallways and corridors.
  - 2. The use of Christmas lights on doors should not be allowed.
  - 3. Decorative materials should be of a fire-resistive nature or chemically treated to render the materials fire-retardant. There are commercial products available or the following solution is acceptable: 9 oz. borax, 4 oz. boric acid, 1 gallon water, and ½ teaspoon low sudsing detergent.
  - 4. Natural materials such as straw and pine garlands should not be used.
  - 5. Paper decorations should not cover more than 25% of the surface of any wall. For example, if an office wall is 8 feet high by 10 feet long, the paper decorations should not cover more than 20 square feet of wall area.
  - 6. No items may be attached to or hung from sprinkler heads or sprinkler system piping. This is a particularly important requirement because of the potential breakage of the sprinkler heads, pipes, and pipe hangers.

- C. Please prohibit the use of Christmas lighting on metallic trees. Only allow lights which have been tested by an independent agency, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL).
- D. Please discourage the use of cut natural Christmas trees. If, however, a cut natural tree is utilized it will be subject to the following restrictions:
  - 1. Contact the Fire Marshal's Office (FMO) for approval and assistance at 3-5858.
  - 2. Immerse the trunk in water or wet sand while the tree is located inside the building.
  - 3. Treat the tree with a flame-retardant product, if it is to be maintained in excess of fifteen days. There are commercial products available or the following solution is acceptable: 9 oz. borax, 4 oz. boric acid, 1 gallon water, and ½ teaspoon low sudsing detergent.
  - 4. Place the tree in such a way as not to obstruct aisles or exits. Do not allow placement in proximity to any ready source of ignition.
  - 5. Remove the tree prior to the extended University holiday shutdown.
- E. Please remove all decorations before departure for the Christmas break.**