Holiday Decoration Guidelines

Safety Considerations Regarding Holiday Decorations:

The following is a summary of current UWM guidelines regarding holiday decorations and addresses the use of trees, wreaths, evergreen branches, lights and extension cords in university buildings.

Live trees, wreaths and branches are not to be placed in any University buildings because they are a fire hazard.

- Artificial trees or wreaths made of flame retardant materials may be placed in office areas, lobbies and reception areas.
- Trees or other decorations may not be located in exit corridors and must not block emergency egress from any room or building.
- Decorations should never be placed where they reduce the size of travel paths below 48 inches, or obstruct sprinkler heads or exit signs.
- Decorations may not be attached to fire sprinklers, smoke alarms or other fire equipment. Fire equipment (extinguishers and fire hoses) must not be blocked by holiday decorations.
- Only lights specified for indoor use may be placed in University buildings. The lights must have the Underwriter's Laboratory (U.L.) approval.
- Cords should be inspected for deterioration and cracking. If either exists, the lights may not be used.
- If extension cords are needed, use the heavy duty type. Unplug cords when the area is not attended. Fused power strips should be used to avoid circuit overloads.
- Electrical cords may not be run beneath rugs or across work surfaces. Make certain cords are located so they won't become a trip hazard.
- Candles, oil lamps, incense or other flame-producing items are not allowed during the holidays or at any other time of the year.
- Use ladders - not chairs, stepstools or boxes when installing decorations in high locations.

Please feel free to contact Risk Management at x6339 if you have any questions or need additional information.

Additional Information:

- [UW System Legal Opinion on Display of Christmas Trees and Religious Holiday Symbols on Campus](#)
- [Winter Holiday Safety Fact Sheet, National Fire Protection Association](#)
- [Christmas Tree Fires Fact Sheet, National Fire Protection Association](#)