Winter Holiday Safety

The holidays are a time when we get together to celebrate with friends and family. Unfortunately, these celebrations can quickly become filled with loss and devastation if safety is not the #1 priority. Whether you partake in the celebration of a local holiday or a special cultural tradition, the following best practices should be observed when hosting events here at the University of Florida.

Trees and Lights
• “Live cut” trees (such as Christmas Trees) are prohibited in the residence halls and buildings without a fire sprinkler system. EH&S must approve.
• Decorative lights should be checked for fraying or other damage that could cause an electrical fire. Do not overload electrical receptacles and follow all manufacture’s recommendations.
• All decorative lighting should be taken down within 90 days of being placed.

Candles
• Only battery-operated candles with artificial flames (light bulbs) should be used indoors. Candles and live or open flames are prohibited on UF campus property.

Fireworks
• Any fireworks on UF campus is prohibited.

Space Heaters
• Unplug space heaters when not in use. Space heaters require a 3 foot clearance around the unit when in use. They must be UL Listed and have automatic shut off when tipped over. Finally, space heaters must be plugged directly into an approved wall outlet and not a power strip or extension cord.
• Request [EH&S purchase approval](#) before buying

Cooking
• Follow all fire safety best practices for cooking. Never leave food cooking unattended.

General Guidance
• No more than 10% of any wall or ceiling should be covered with combustible decorations.
• Combustible decorations or coverings should not be applied to any fire door, such as those serving stairways, mechanical rooms, electrical rooms, etc.
• Hallways, exits, and exit signs should remain unobstructed & visible at all times.

The EH&S team wishes you a happy & safe holiday!

EHS.UFL.EDU
Winter holidays are a time for families and friends to get together. But that also means a greater risk for fire. Following a few simple tips will ensure a happy and fire-safe holiday season.

**HOLIDAY DECORATING**
- Be careful with holiday decorations. Choose decorations that are flame resistant or flame retardant.
- Keep lit candles away from decorations and other things that can burn.
- Some lights are only for indoor or outdoor use, but not both.
- Replace any string of lights with worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections. Read manufacturer’s instructions for number of light strands to connect.
- Use clips, not nails, to hang lights so the cords do not get damaged.
- Keep decorations away from windows and doors.

**HOLIDAY ENTERTAINING**
- Test your smoke alarms and tell guests about your home fire escape plan.
- Keep children and pets away from lit candles.
- Keep matches and lighters up high in a locked cabinet.
- Stay in the kitchen when cooking on the stovetop.
- Ask smokers to smoke outside. Remind smokers to keep their smoking materials with them so young children do not touch them.
- Provide large, deep ashtrays for smokers. Wet cigarette butts with water before discarding.

Before Heading Out or to Bed
- **Blow out** lit candles when you leave the room or go to bed. **Turn off** all light strings and decorations before leaving home or going to bed.

**FACTS**

- More than one-third of home decoration fires are started by candles.
- More than two of every five decoration fires happen because decorations are placed too close to a heat source.
As you deck the halls this holiday season, be fire smart. A small fire that spreads to a Christmas tree can grow large very quickly.

**PICKING THE TREE**
- Choose a tree with fresh, green needles that do not fall off when touched.

**PLACING THE TREE**
- Before placing the tree in the stand, cut 2” from the base of the trunk.
- Make sure the tree is at least three feet away from any heat source, like fireplaces, radiators, candles, heat vents or lights.
- Make sure the tree is not blocking an exit.
- Add water to the tree stand. Be sure to add water daily.

**LIGHTING THE TREE**
- Use lights that are listed by a qualified testing laboratory. Some lights are only for indoor or outdoor use.
- Replace any string of lights with worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections. Read manufacturer’s instructions for number of light strands to connect.
- Never use lit candles to decorate the tree.
- Always turn off Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.

**After Christmas**
Get rid of the tree after Christmas or when it is dry. Dried-out trees are a fire danger and should not be left in the home or garage, or placed outside against the home.

Check with your local community to find a recycling program.

Bring outdoor electrical lights inside after the holidays to prevent hazards and make them last longer.

**FACTS**

- Almost one third of home Christmas tree fires are caused by electrical problems.
- Although Christmas tree fires are not common, when they do occur, they are more likely to be serious.
- A heat source too close to the tree causes more than one in every five of the fires.