

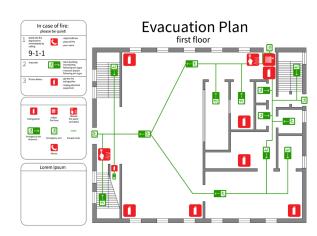
Holiday Safety Tips

By Kevin Luke

The holiday season usually brings an abundance of office decorations, parties and gatherings that show holiday spirit. In many cases, the décor goes beyond the normal scope of traditional decoration with unique lighting products, paper and plastic decorations, and use of temporary electrical devices such as timers and extension cords. The holiday season may also bring increased traffic to the agency from the general public that can pose safety concerns for everyone involved. Because of the extra décor at this time of year, the general public and staff are exposed to higher than expected risks of Fire, Electrical Shocks and Slip, Trip and Fall (STF) hazards. Below are safety reminders to share with staff on the "Do's and Don'ts" during the holiday season while decorating and preparing for holiday festivities.

Do's

- Scientifically Tested and Approved: Use Underwriting Laboratories (UL-Listed) or Factory Mutual (FM-Listed) light fixtures and products when installing decorations whenever possible. UL and FM-listed products have been thoroughly tested for quality, performance and safety against rigorous industry standards.
- Qualified or Competent: Hire a contractor or assign competent staff members to install décor and lighting. A competent individual or contractor will help the agency avoid liability claims and decrease the chances of an injury.
- Emergency Action Plan: Ensure the agency's Emergency Action Plan (EAP) is updated, posted conspicuously, and reviewed with staff to ensure employees are knowledgeable on egress, communication and assembly points. During a fire event, it is critical that staff knows how and where to exit the building to get to safety. Evacuation map postings and emergency exit illumination are essential for the general public's safe evacuation. Read the requirements and best practices per CAL/OSHA.



Fire Defense Systems: Determine that the agency's smoke
alarms, fire extinguishers and automatic fire sprinkler system are serviced and tested, meeting <u>National Fire</u>
<u>Protection Association (NFPA)</u> 72, 10 and 25 respectively. These systems are the agency's "first line of defense"
in the event of a fire and will help mitigate the amount of property damage to the facility.



RISK SIMPLIFIED

- Check the Cords: Inspect all temporary cords and wiring for damage, loose plugs, faulty outlets, receptacles and
 fraying as this may lead to an electrical shock hazard or potential fire from décor lighting. Electrical shocks are
 dangerous and should be protected against. Also, the risk of fire is greater when circuits are interrupted from
 damaged wiring.
- Permanent Lighting: Verify permanent lighting is adequate and in working condition on the exterior and interior
 of the premises. If any repairs or replacements are needed, have a competent staff member or contractor
 perform the work as needed. Having adequate lighting in the workplace is an effective way to help prevent STF
 injuries.
- Temporary Lighting: Plan out the usage of all temporary lighting. Limit the amount of time holiday lights will be turned on. Use a timer to turn off the lights during the evening. Otherwise, establish a process of having staff turn off the lights as part of the "lock up" procedures at the end of the shift.

Don'ts

- Setting Candles, Trees and Wreaths: Avoid the use of open flame or handheld candles or fresh cut trees and wreaths as they are mostly prohibited in business and public assembly occupancies. These items are commonly involved in fire events nationwide due to their combustibility.
- Hanging Decorations: Decorations should not be hung on oscillating or permanent fixtures such as fans, clocks, fire sprinkler pendants, and lighting on the ceiling. Decorations may obstruct the performance of these items and cause property damage.
- Using Space Heaters: Avoid the usage of space heaters at all times. Though space heaters are an efficient heating source in a smaller, confined area during the winter, space heaters left unattended pose a significant fire risk. Space heaters that are left running and unattended can overload smaller amperage electrical circuits. There is also the risk of the heater becoming an ignition source for fire if left near other combustible items.



- Adjoining Combustibles and Heat-Producing Devices: Decorations should
 not be installed within three feet of any heat-producing devices. A common cause of fire is combustible items
 igniting due to being too close to heating elements, such as stoves, dryers, furnaces, space heaters, etc.
- Using Extension Cords: Remove unnecessary wiring from the agency decoration plans. Plan out an efficient
 design in order to avoid "daisy chaining" extension cords. Daisy chaining is the connection of two or more
 extension cords or power strips. This is commonly performed when there is inadequate access to power outlets.
 Extension Cords are commonly used to expand the building's electrical system temporarily and should be used
 in compliance with <u>best practices</u> noted here.



- Blocking Egress Points: Eliminate obstructions to egress points and common work areas. <u>Obstructions</u> commonly lead to slip, trip and fall injuries and may impede quick exiting of the building in the event of a fire
- Damaged Electrical Wiring and Cords: Avoid repairing temporary electrical devices. It is considered best practice to remove all electrical devices with broken or damaged cords from service altogether.

PRISM wishes you a safe and incident-free holiday season! <u>Contact the PRISM Risk Control Department</u> for questions or additional assistance.

