



Holiday Fire 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 practices should be observed when hosting events here at Carnegie Mellon University.

Best Practices

- Mazes, tents, or similar structures should never be placed indoors.
- Hallways, exits, and exit signs should remain unobstructed at all times.
- 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.
- Decorative lights should be checked for fraying or other damage that could cause an electrical fire. Make sure to not overload electrical receptacles and follow all manufactures' recommendations.
- All decorative lighting should be taken down within 90 days of being placed.
- Only battery-operated candles with artificial flames (light bulbs) should be used indoors. No candles with live or open flames are permitted.
- The use of smoke and fog machines in any university facility is prohibited unless approved by EHS. This is to ensure that the use of smoke/fog machines won't activate the buildings smoke detectors and cause a false alarm.
- Dry hay and straw should not be used indoors as it can quickly catch fire and spread rapidly.
- Follow all fire safety best practices for cooking, electrical, heating, smoking, and more. These can also be found on the CMU Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) website.

Live Garland and Trees

The use of live garland and trees during the holiday season dates back hundreds of years and has remained a tradition that is cherished by many. However, these can become a significant fire hazard if precautions are not taken.

Live garland and trees are prohibited inside of any housing building or dorm room, however artificial products are permitted. In all other academic or administrative buildings, live garland and trees are discouraged, but are permitted under the following conditions:

The use of a live tree is subject to the approval of EHS, who must be notified to have a safety assessment completed of the proposed location. This should take place before purchasing or taking delivery of the tree.

Approved live trees must be positioned in an area beneath a sprinkler head and a plan must be in place to have the tree watered daily. There must also be a plan in place for when the tree will be removed. All live trees must be removed BEFORE the start of the university holiday break unless a written agreement is in place to have the tree watered while the building is unoccupied. If it is observed during any time that needles or leaves easily drop from the tree when shaken, it must be removed immediately.

Safety concern, training request, or other inquiry?
Reach out to the Environmental Health and Safety Department today!
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