

UTRGV Fire Safety Guidelines for Holiday Decorations

The following guideline have been established by the UTRGV Department of Environmental Health, Safety, and Risk Management for your safety. They apply to all university owned, leased and rented buildings. Please review these guidelines before installing any decorations. If you have any questions, please contact EHSRM at (956) 665-3690 or 665-2458 and speak to Saul Jauregui.

General Decorations

1. Candles or any open flames in any form are prohibited.
2. Decorations cannot exceed more than 50% of a door area.
3. Decorations cannot exceed more than 20% of a wall area.
4. Readily ignitable materials such as evergreen branches, boughs, hay bales, etc. are prohibited in hallways, corridors, stairwells, or other means of egress.
5. Combustible material such as wrapping paper, fabrics, etc. are prohibited when fastened to doors as well as when attached to ceilings of corridors, stairways or other common areas designed as exit ways.
6. No decoration or tree may block any smoke detector, fire alarm system component, sprinkler, pull station, exit sign, emergency lighting or building fire equipment at any time.
7. Combustible party decorations, gift wrappings, etc. must be disposed of promptly after use.
8. Holiday decorations shall not be placed on sprinkler heads for any reason or for any period of time.

Lighting Sets

1. Lighting sets may not be in contact with draperies, paper, or combustible decorations.
2. All lighting sets should be physically examined before use to detect frayed wiring and other conditions which might create a fire hazard or cause a shock.
3. Use clips and not nails or staples to hang lights so light strands cannot be damaged.
4. Read manufacturer's instructions for maximum number of light strands to connect.
5. If extension cords are used, they may not run through a door way, create a trip hazard, and must be connected to a UL approved surge protector.

Artificial and Natural Holiday Trees

1. The tree may not obstruct any corridor, exit doorway, or other means of egress.
2. No combustible decorations, tree skirts or decorative gift packages may be placed on or under a tree except in an area protected by automatic sprinklers.
3. Only non-combustible trimmings are permitted.
4. Trees should not extend beyond 18 inches from the ceiling.
5. Christmas tree lighting should be turned off prior to leaving at the end of the day.

Natural Holiday Trees

1. Natural trees are not allowed in sleeping areas or in buildings not protected by an automatic sprinkler system.
2. Natural trees must be placed in an appropriate tree stand and the water level checked daily.
3. Natural trees that are excessively dried out are subject to immediate removal.
4. A natural tree may not be located near any heating vent or other heating device which could cause the greenery to dry out prematurely.



Candles account for 40% of holiday fires. Flameless candles are a safe alternative.



Decorations placed too close to heat sources account for 50% of holiday decoration fires.



Natural trees require approval prior to placement. Contact EHSRM: Saul Jauregui 665-3690