Campus Holiday Fire Safety

According to the U.S. Fire Administration, each year, 230 home fires start with Christmas trees. These fires cause an average of 4 deaths, 21 injuries and $17.3 million in direct property damage. With the approaching holiday season, the following guidelines can help to minimize potential hazards:

- Holiday trees are permitted on campus, but should be removed the last working day before Winter Administrative Recess.

- In the workplace, trees, wreaths, and garlands should be artificial, labeled “flame-retardant” and should not interfere with sprinkler systems or exit.

- Holiday trees can be one of the most hazardous items you bring into your home or office. A dry tree can be totally engulfed in fire within three seconds, generating such intense heat that it can ignite the furnishings and wall and window coverings in an entire room in less than one minute.

  Click here to view a video that illustrates what happens when fire touches a properly maintained, well-watered tree vs. a dry tree https://youtu.be/xr6b9b8FYKk

- Cut trees remain fresh for approximately three weeks if the trunk is kept wet. Have your tree freshly cut on the butt-end at a 45-degree angle, and get it into water as soon as possible. Use hot water for the first filling.

- Trees must be placed in sturdy stands and adequately supported. An average tree may consume several quarts of water per day, so be sure to add water daily and especially on Friday afternoon, before the weekend.

- Trees or other decorative materials MUST NOT be located in any area where they may block corridors, exit passageways, fire exits, doorways, or ramps.

- All decorations should be flame retardant. Look for the California State Fire Marshal’s Seal of Approval on packages of decorative materials.

- Only UL approved, low wattage, fused lights may be used to decorate trees. No screw-in type bulbs are permitted.

- Lights must be unplugged at the end of each business day.

- Extension cords, if used, should be equipped with LCD’ (Leakage Current Detection and Interruption) for circuit protection. This type of protection is available in Fire Shield brand extension cords and power strips available at most home improvement stores such as Home Depot.

The following items are PROHIBITED in campus buildings:

- Candles or other open flame devices.

- Decorations that interfere with operation, access, or visibility of security systems, switches, electric outlets and panels, exit signs, fire hoses, fire sprinklers and extinguishers.

- Use of spray snow or paint on windows.

All of us in Environmental Health & Safety wish you and yours a truly safe and joyous holiday season.

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