

No matter how you celebrate, keeping students, faculty, staff, and the family safe during the holidays is at the top of everyone's wish list. Safety precautions to consider during the holiday season include the following:

Holiday Decorations

- Injuries due to falls are a major holiday hazard. Always use a proper step stool or ladder to reach high places when putting up holiday decorations. **Chairs, tables, and other furniture are not designed for use as an elevated work surface!** If you need to hang something higher than you can safely reach, use an approved ladder and not a chair, desk, or box. Make sure you know how to use a ladder safely.
- A fire extinguisher with a minimum of an "A" rating should be readily available within 75 feet of the tree, wreaths, and boughs.
- Christmas trees and/or holiday decorations shall not obstruct corridors, exit ways, or other means of egress.
- Plan your decorating to minimize tripping hazards or snagging clothes.
- Do not hang decorations on sprinkler heads and lights.
- Ensure seasonal decorations do not block, hide, or obscure safety equipment such as fire alarm strobe lights or horns, safety signage or evacuation plans, fire extinguishers, safety showers, or eyewash units.
- Do more with less; a little bit of bright holiday color can go a long way. Limit the amount of combustible paper or fabrics that are hung on doors, walls, and ceilings to no more than 5% of the surface area. These materials can enable a fire to spread rapidly.
- If you choose to use candles **at home**, please keep them away from decorations or other items that can burn or areas where children or pets can bump into them.



Holiday Electrical Safety

- Discard or repair damaged sockets, worn-out wires, or loose connections.
- Use battery-powered tea lights when a candle-light effect is desired.
State law **prohibits** the use of lighted candles, incense, and/or any other ember-producing materials in University buildings at all times.
- Do not use electric lights on a metallic tree.
- Check your lights before decorating:
 - Ensure all holiday lighting has a label that says it is "UL listed." If it doesn't have this label, the lighting is not safe to use.
 - Use only light sets marked as "indoor" or "indoor/outdoor" inside buildings.
 - Make sure all the light sockets are filled before decorating.



- Keep all lights away from combustible materials such as fabrics or paper decorations.
- Don't connect more than three strands of lights to one extension cord.
- Extension cords can be used with holiday decorations as long as the decorations are taken down within a few weeks.
- Ensure all light strands and electrical cords are free of cuts, crimps, cracks, and/or repairs. Never use a "three-prong-to-two-prong" plug adapter to bypass a grounded plug. Keep all electrical cords out of traffic areas, and not under rugs, through doorways, and/or taped to the floor.
- Conserve electricity and prevent electrical fires: Turn off all lights, appliances, and other electrical equipment when the room is unattended and before leaving for the day.



DO NOT DAISY-CHAIN or plug surge protectors/power strips/extension cords together due to the risk of overloading the circuit and potential fire hazard.

Holiday Food Safety

- **Keep foods separated.** Keep meat, chicken, turkey, seafood, and eggs separated from all other foods at the grocery store and in the refrigerator. Prevent juices from meat, chicken, turkey, and seafood from dripping or leaking onto other foods by keeping them in containers or sealed plastic bags.
- **Wash your hands before handling food.** Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with water and soap.
- **Cook food thoroughly.** Use a food thermometer to make sure meat, chicken, turkey, seafood, and eggs have been cooked to a safe internal temperature to kill germs.
- **Keep food out of the "danger zone."** Germs can grow rapidly in the danger zone between 40°F and 140°F. After food is prepared, keep hot food hot and cold food cold. Refrigerate or freeze perishable food like meat, chicken, turkey, seafood, eggs, cut fruit, cooked rice, and leftovers within 2 hours (1 hour if food is exposed to temperatures above 90°F, such as in a hot car). The temperature in your refrigerator should be set at 40°F or below and the freezer at 0°F or below.

Resources

- Cal-OSHA Title 8 Regulations <https://www.dir.ca.gov/title8/sb5g1.html>
- [National Fire Protection Agency \(NFPA\) Electric Code 70](#)
- <https://www.ucop.edu/risk-services/files/bsas/safetymeetings/powerstripsafety.pdf>
- <https://www.ehs.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/lines-of-services/workplace-safety/30extencords.pdf>

Contact **EHS at (949) 824-6200** or safety@uci.edu for questions.