

Fire Safety Guidance

Introduction

With the Christmas period upon us, the Fire Safety Unit would like to remind people to stay fire safe throughout the festive season.

As outlined in the University Health and Safety Policy each Head of College, School, and Support Group must ensure that the necessary level of safety is maintained throughout their area of responsibility. This includes the management of fire safety. Under the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006, duties are apportioned to the Head of College, School, and Support Group in their capacity as “the employer, the responsible person or the person in control of the premises”. This role as “Dutyholder” can be devolved to an appropriate management level.

Dutyholders

Dutyholders must take steps to ensure that the necessary level of safety is maintained throughout their area of responsibility and includes the “in-house” management of fire safety.

This should include effective liaison with the University Fire Safety Adviser and Fire Safety Area Supervisors, in particular ensuring that systems are in place to enable the contents of this Fire Safety Guidance Note to be implemented.

Christmas tree and decorations

At this time of year some people will decorate their homes with lights, decorations and candles. With appropriate care and attention, decorations and lights can be safely used.

When considering the use of Christmas trees and decorations, fire is probably the biggest danger which University personnel will ever have to face. It can break out almost anywhere and can affect everyone.

Certain types of Christmas trees and decorations are combustible and the introduction of these additional hazards into buildings can increase the risks to the building users.

If you are considering having a Christmas tree or any decorations then additional fire safety precautions may need to be taken, especially in open access areas, where the public have access or in fire escape routes.

A burning tree can rapidly fill an area with fire and deadly gases as illustrated in [this YouTube video](#).

It is with the safety of all staff, students and building users in mind that the following recommendations are made.

Trees and decorations should not be displayed before the 1st December and should be taken down as soon as possible after Christmas.

Choice of tree

- Where possible use artificial trees
- All artificial trees should be flame retardant
- Fibre optic trees and lights should conform to the appropriate British Standard - always look for the 'British Standard' kite mark
- Trees must be securely positioned in place

If a real tree cut or rooted is considered the only option then a Risk Assessment must be carried out and submitted to the Fire Safety Unit for approval prior to the introduction of the tree.

Positioning of Christmas trees

- Trees must be securely positioned in place
- Ensure that they do not compromise any escape routes from the building

Christmas trees **should not** be positioned:

- Adjacent to fire exit doors or fire exit routes
- In stairwells or stair landings
- In areas with a high fire loading (combustible materials)

Christmas tree lights

It is strongly recommended that decorative lights should be an LED type and operated by battery, the lights should only be displayed on trees.

Mains powered decorative lights should only be used if they are:

- Connected through a local RCD plug or socket
- Incorporate a plug-in 12v transformer
- Under a year old, or if older be subject to a current portable appliance test (PAT)
- Lights should not be left on out-with normal working hours

Christmas decorations

One of the most common sources of fire at this time of the year is temporary lighting igniting paper or plastic decorations.

Even when the decorations have been positioned with care it is not uncommon for them to become dislodged or moved as the festive activities continue.

In extreme cases, hot lamps/light bulbs/decorative candles etc. can be brought into contact with highly flammable paper or plastic decorations resulting in a fire.

Decorations should be kept to a minimum and must not be fastened to, or in close proximity to, light fittings, electrical equipment or any other potential ignition source.

Metal strip type decorations must not be fastened to or in close proximity to, any electrical fitting as they may conduct electricity.

Ensure that the items do not compromise the means of escape from a Department or property.

Candles and tea-lights

Naked flame candles or tea-lights **must not** be used at any time. However, battery operated candles and tea-lights may be used.

Fire Risk Assessment

The Fire Safety Unit would advise that you carry out a review of the fire safety arrangements and implement additional fire safety checks when using Christmas trees and decorations.