Decorating on Campus - Holiday Safety

It is that special time of year again, many will choose to add festive holiday decorations and twinkle lights to brighten our work spaces.

The Department of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) would like to remind the Campus community of the importance of fire prevention, especially during the holidays. While holiday decorating creates a festive atmosphere, new hazards are often inadvertently introduced into the workplace.

The following safety tips will help prevent fire and keep our workplace safe:

- Live Christmas trees are prohibited on campus with exception of small potted trees, and these must be removed if they become dry/dead. Artificial trees should be labeled as flame retardant.
- All electrical decorations including lights should be UL listed or equivalent.
- Read instructions before installing holiday lights; do not connect more sets together than stated in the instructions.
- Never use metal items such as paper clips to secure light strands or other electrical cords.
- Do not obscure or cover exit doors or exit signs. Make sure all exit routes are clear and are not blocked by items such as tables, chairs, etc.
- If using extension cords (temporary use only) be sure they are free of any damages or defects including the plug.
- Make sure extension cords and power strips are adequately rated for the use and do not overload power strips -15 amps is the maximum load.
- Do NOT use extension cords and power strips together.
- Avoid running cords across walkways, through doorways, or under rugs as this can cause damage to the cord and result in fire.
- Do not create trip hazards, cords and other items should not be in walkways or protruding into walkways.
- Minimize the use of paper, cloth, and plastic decorations. Never attach decorations to sprinkler heads. If possible, use flame retardant decorations. Increasing the amount of combustible materials in any space can drastically increase the spread of smoke and fire and the overall severity of the fire.

We encourage individuals to check their work space for hazards on a regular basis and to eliminate hazards as needed. Ideally, all employees should work together to maintain a safe work environment.

While holiday decorating is fun and festive, often “less is more” in terms of fire safety!

If you have specific concerns or questions, please contact EHS at 898-5126.