Christmas Safety Advice

Christmas is a special time for celebration and should not end in tragedy because of the extra hazards that are present at this time of year.

Christmas Trees

Special fire safety precautions need to be taken when keeping a live tree in the building. A burning tree can rapidly fill a room with fire and deadly gases. This can be demonstrated by viewing the following video.

Selecting a Tree for Christmas

Needles on fresh trees should be green and hard to pull back from the branches, and the needle should not break if the tree has been freshly cut. The trunk should be sticky to the touch. Old trees can be identified by bouncing the tree trunk on the ground. If many needles fall off, the tree has been cut too long, has probably dried out.

Caring for Your Tree

Do not place your tree close to a heat source, including a fireplace or heat vent. The heat will dry out the tree, causing it to be more easily ignited by heat, flame or sparks. Do not put your live tree up too early or leave it up for longer than **two weeks**. Keep the tree stand filled with water at all times, with water level checked daily. If needles start to fall off it has probably dried out , therefore is a fire hazard and should be removed.

Fairy Lights

- If fairy lights are not new, they require a Portable Appliance Test (PAT)
- Lights should be British Standard Safety marked
- Check the fuses are the right type (see the box for the maximum size of fuse you should use)
- If bulbs blow, replace them
- Don't leave fairy lights on when the building is not occupied (digital timer plug)
- Don't let the bulbs touch anything that can burn easily, like paper
- Don't overload sockets or 'fairy chain' extensions

Decorations

- Don't situate trees or decorations so they obstruct any fire exits, escape routes, fire alarm call points, firefighting equipment, or fire doors.
- Real Christmas trees should not be placed in corridors, stairwells, or escape routes.
- Fire doors must not be decorated, covered, wrapped, wedged open, or have signs, posters, tinsel, tape, hooks, or other items attached to them. Fire doors must be able to close fully and operate correctly at all times.
- Do not attach decorations to lights, electrical fittings, heaters, radiators, or other heat-producing equipment.
- Keep corridors, staircases, and escape routes sterile and free from combustible materials wherever possible.
- Do not install bunting, hanging displays, streamers, or other suspended decorations in corridors, escape routes, or stairwells.
- Use flame-retardant decorations wherever possible.
- Avoid using excessive amounts of paper, cardboard, or other combustible decorations.
- Ensure decorations do not obscure emergency lighting, fire safety signs, smoke detectors, sprinkler heads, or fire alarm devices.
- Do not run extension leads or electrical cables beneath carpets, through doorways, or across walkways where they may become damaged or create trip hazards.
- Battery-powered decorations should use rechargeable or quality batteries and should be switched off when areas are unoccupied.
- Decorative candles, tea lights, and other naked flames should not be used within Council buildings.
- Ensure all temporary displays are securely fixed and regularly checked to prevent them becoming detached or creating hazards.
- Remove decorations promptly after the festive period and dispose of dried-out trees immediately.

General Christmas Fire Safety

- Staff should report any damaged electrical decorations, cables, or plugs immediately.
- Fire exits and evacuation routes must remain available for use at all times.
- Additional combustible materials associated with seasonal displays should be kept to a minimum.
- Staff should ensure Christmas displays are assessed and monitored to maintain fire safety standards.
- A quick visual check of decorations and electrical items should be carried out before the building is closed for holiday periods.