

## Fire Safety during the Holidays

This coming holiday season, take an extra moment to look around your facilities for potential fire hazards. Often, you'll find additional electrical cords hooked to holiday lights. Are these cords frayed, properly taped down to prevent trip hazards, or plugged into ungrounded electrical outlets? Is someone assigned to turn off decorative lights when the building is unoccupied? Do decorations or trees obscure or block visibility into rooms or prevent normal egress in case of fire? Are your fire extinguishers easily seen and fully charged?

Lighted candles are rarely a good idea, especially if left unsupervised. Decorations, particularly those made of paper or plastic, significantly increase the quantity of fuel for fires. These combustibles will burn quickly, resulting in a fire that is likely to spread faster and burn hotter than would occur at other times of the year. The plastics may also release toxic fumes. If your building has sprinklers, talk with your local fire marshal or sprinkler inspection firm to verify that your sprinkler system will adequately suppress the additional fuel load. Make sure that decorations do not block sprinklers or their spray zones. Also, an unannounced fire drill is appropriate to remind staff and youth how to properly evacuate the building and the importance of fire safety.

A five minute walk-through of your building looking for fire hazards can help ensure that the glow of this holiday season is not due to your building burning down!