

## Health and Safety Guidance (Fire) – Christmas decorations and decorative lights

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The introduction of combustible materials of any kind into a University building increases the fire load in the building and this includes Christmas decorations in all its various forms. Real dangers result from the combustibility of these types of material.

### **Christmas decorative trimmings** (e.g. garlands, tinsel etc)

All paper trimmings should be inherently flame retardant. They must not be hung adjacent to light bulbs or other sources of ignition, or where they may come into contact with a source of ignition should they come loose and fall.

### **Cotton wool**

Cotton wool or other readily combustible materials must not be used unless adequately treated to render them inherently flame retardant.

### **Christmas trees**

Christmas trees must not be decorated with lit candles.

They should be set firmly in a suitable container to ensure they will not fall over.

They must be located where they can't cause an obstruction to the means of escape from the room or building.

Natural Christmas trees are flammable. They dry out and should therefore be kept in a tree stand filled with water and adequately separated from heat source. There needs to be arrangements in place to keep the tree water topped up, including through the holiday period. They should only be allowed where agreed by the University Health & Safety Service. Where possible use a flame-retardant alternative.

### **Christmas (decorative) lights**

Christmas (decorative) lights must conform to the relevant British or European standard; (BS EN 60598). Check to ensure that the lights are fitted with an approved plug with a 3 amp fuse or a transformer.

Do not use the lights outdoors unless they are specially made for such a purpose and are fitted with a 30mA Residual Current Device (RCD), if one is not already connected to the circuit being used.

They should be visually inspected every year before use to ensure they are in good condition. Inspect cables and bulbs for damage before use. Look for signs of overheating, cuts or fraying in cables, cracks or damage to lamp holders. Ensure wires are double insulated and firmly attached to the plug by the internal cord restraint.

They should be double-insulated. (Look for a symbol showing a small square inside a larger square). They should not be placed near to any flammable materials.

In Residential Halls, Christmas (decorative) lights must be installed in common areas under the control of the residential organization.

At night, or when buildings are empty, switch off any Christmas or decorative lights and unplug them.

240 volt light sets should be tested and inspected regularly as part of your Department's portable appliance testing regime.

Do not use lights which are damaged. Replace failed lamps with ones of the same rated voltage and wattage. Never insert or remove bulbs when the lights are switched on.

Avoid overloading electrical sockets.

Avoid leaving trailing cables across floors where they can cause a trip hazard or be tripped over.

### **Aerosols**

Aerosol cans (e.g. decorative paint, artificial snow etc) use flammable propellants and must not be used near heat sources.

### **Party Poppers**

Party poppers are not considered a significant fire hazard but it is advised that they are not fired towards heat sources.