
Title:	Fire Safety at Christmas
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1 INTRODUCTION

Buildings and Estates 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 Unit / Support Group must ensure that the necessary level of safety is maintained throughout their area of responsibility. This includes the management of fire safety. As per the Universities Safety Statement Policy, Head of Units, 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.

2 DUTYHOLDER

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 Officer 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.

3 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 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?gl=US&hl=uk&v=o2dNN2waoSw> types of occupants

Occupants at greater risk include the people with mobility impairments, children, and members of the public who are not familiar with the building. Additional fire marshals are required where high risk occupants are present.

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.

4 CHOICE OF TREE

- Where possible use artificial trees that are flame resistant
- Fibre optic trees and lights should be CE marked.
- Trees must be securely positioned in place.

- Keep the tree away from candles, heaters, fireplaces or other heat sources – remember, a fire can start with a combination of heat and dry material and doesn't need a naked flame.

If a real tree cut or rooted is considered the only option then a Risk Assessment must be carried out and e-mailed to buildingsandestates@nuigalway.ie for approval prior to the introduction of the tree.

5 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).

6 CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTS

Decorative lights should be an LED type and operated by battery or mains transformer. Check lights and cables for physical damage before use.

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

- Connected through a local socket only, extensions cables should be avoided.
- Under a year old, or if older be subject to a current portable appliance test (PAT)
- Lights should not be left on out-side of normal working hours

7 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.

8 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.