

# THE RISK OBSERVER

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## DECEMBER HOLIDAY ACTIVITY SAFETY REMINDERS

December is a busy month in schools, with a big increase in evening events, special programs with visitors present during the day, and the creation of holiday displays. Following are a few safety reminders that can be used to refresh the awareness of all staff members.

### SCHOOL FIRES

An average of 5,500 structure fires occurs annually in schools. They are responsible for about 125 injuries, up to five fatalities and \$50.1 Million dollars in property loss. **The potential for a school fire increases during the holiday season because of the introduction of Christmas trees, expanded use of electrical cords, and the increase of paper mounted on classroom and hall walls.**

### CHRISTMAS TREES

- Consider using only artificial Christmas trees that bear the Underwriter's (UL) label.
- Use only light leads made for the newer cool-burning miniature bulbs. They must contain an integral fuse in or near the male plug, and must also be UL labeled.
- Do not exceed the manufacturer's recommendations on the maximum number of lights that may be used in a combination of leads or that may be plugged into one outlet.
- Don't use traditional glass ornaments. They can shatter on impact and cause injury.
- Place the Christmas tree so that only a short extension cord is needed. Be aware of tripping hazards.
- Do not place Christmas trees in corridors. When placing trees, keep areas of travel clear at all times, with no obstruction of the free flow of traffic.
- Do not use untreated paper, plastics or natural tree boughs, they are fire hazards. Use only decorations that bear the UL label or are certified by the manufacturer to be flame resistant.

### DECORATIONS

- Keep all displayed material at least two (2) feet from ceilings and 10 feet from exit doors, including classroom doors.
- Displayed material must be directly mounted on noncombustible wall surfaces. Foam mounting boards are combustible, emit toxic vapors when ignited, and contribute to the spread of fire.
- Do not let mounted materials exceed 20% of the noncombustible wall surface; some jurisdictions recommend no more than 5%.
- For added safety, artwork can be treated with a fire retardant.

### ASSEMBLY EVENTS

Anticipate the potential for exceeding space occupancy and the need to keep exits and fire lanes clear. Work with local fire and police agencies to identify potential hazards and develop workable solutions.



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