

**Sample checklist: Spot check your facility’s holiday decorations**

Use this checklist to help monitor and assess fire safety concerns regarding holiday decorations and displays. Any “no” answers may indicate a life safety risk for occupants.

Although The Joint Commission and other regulators don’t specifically note many of these steps, they are best practices that will help you comply with various provisions on decoration safety.

**Properties of decorations**

- Are all decorations noncombustible or flame-retardant?
- Does the hospital ban all cut trees and vegetation (which could dry out and become a burning risk) used as decorations?
- Does the hospital ban all open flames from decoration displays unless approved by management?
- Do electrical or battery-operated light strings and displays have a label from a recognized testing laboratory (e.g., Underwriters Laboratories)?
- Are electrical and battery-operated light strings and displays prohibited from patient treatment and sleeping areas?
- Are electrical light strings and displays running on a timer to control how long they remain on?

**Placement of decorations**

- Do decorations cover less than 10% of a door?
- Do decorations obstruct egress routes?
- Do decorations block access to fire protection equipment or devices?
- Do decorations obstruct exit signs?
- Do staff members avoid hanging decorations off sprinkler pipes or sprinkler heads?
- Do decorations block necessary views through windows and vision panels?
- Do staff members avoid placing decorations near electrical equipment and heat sources?
- Do staff members avoid placing electrical cords or light strings such that they create a trip hazard?
- Do staff members avoid using extension cords for electrical decorations?

**Management strategies**

- Do unit managers or safety officers check on decoration placement during hazard surveillance rounds?
- Has the hospital issued a decorations policy reminder to staff members?
- Does the hospital’s decorations policy note how the facility will deal with violations to the policy?\*

Additional concerns: \_\_\_\_\_  
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\* **Note:** This step helps show surveyors that the facility takes action if staff members don’t follow hospital policies.

Sources: Claude Baker, CFPS, fire and life safety officer and interim manager of safety and regulatory compliance, University of Chicago Medical Center; Kansas State Fire Marshal's Office; various information from past issues of **Healthcare Life Safety Compliance** and **Briefings on Hospital Safety**, both published by HCPro, Inc., Marblehead, MA.