



RISK CONTROL MEMORANDUM

To:	Catholic Diocese of Green Bay Parishes, Schools & Other Facilities
Attn:	Business Managers & Facilities Staff
Date:	October 2013
From:	Gwendolyn Arps – Risk Control Consultant Direct Line: 920-431-6265 e-mail: gwendolyn.arps@aon.com Barbara Wiegand, Facilities and Properties Director, bwiegand@gbdioc.org
Re:	Holiday Decoration Safety

With the onset of fall arrives cooler air, the beautiful array of colors, and...our desire to decorate. We love to decorate offices, schools, and even our homes for many holidays and events that occur during the fourth quarter of the year. Unfortunately we don't often think about the safety of these decorations and the need to consider fire prevention best practices. This document will provide a brief summary of safety practices to follow when decorating for the holidays.

Electrical Safety:

- Inspect all electrical decorations for damage before use. This includes all cords, ground plugs, sockets, insulation, and outlets.
- Don't "daisy chain" extension cords. Use surge protectors with multiple outlets if more outlets are needed than are in the immediate area.
- Protect electrical cords from damage by placing them in areas where they won't be pinched, walked over (which is a tripping hazard), or otherwise abraded. Don't place them near heat sources or secure the cord with nails or staples.
- Electrical decorations should bear a label from an independent testing laboratory such as UL (Underwriters Laboratories), CSA (Canadian Standards Association, or ETL (Intertek).
- Unplug all decorations when leaving the office / classroom for the day.

Child Safety:

- Read manufacturer's instructions and warning labels for any decoration that will be used around young children noting if it is appropriate for the age group and determine if adult supervision is required.
- Never use lights, garland, streamers, or other similar decorations as toys with young children as they pose a strangulation hazard.
- Cover unused outlets (on walls and on surge protection strips) with plastic caps to prevent children from coming in contact with live circuits.
- Make sure all garland "loops" are out of reach of small children.



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Fire Safety: Children under the age of 5 are almost eight times as likely to die in a fire caused by playing with heat sources than the general public.

- For decorating, instead of traditional candles, we recommend using battery-operated candles.
- Candles for religious prayers should be in a double insulated glass container and placed on a ceramic or metal base.
- Keep candles, matches, and lighters out of reach of children in a locked cabinet.
- Never leave children unsupervised when candles are lit.
- Place candles where they cannot be knocked down or blown over.
- No smoking near flammable decorations.
- Make an emergency plan to use if a fire breaks out anywhere in the facility.
- Never drape or secure decorations on the sprinkler heads.
- Never drape or secure decorations on the electrical outlets or other sources of heat.
- Keep all combustible decorations at least three (3) feet from heat sources.

Contents from the Electrical Safety Foundation International and the Consumer Product Safety Commission