

Purpose:

This document serves as a resource for departments and units that wish to decorate their area for holidays and during special events, in a safe manner. The objective of this document is to educate the campus community of all federal, state, and local codes and Illinois State University regulations, to prevent injuries and/or property damage.

Scope:

This document serves as a resource regarding the use of temporary holiday, and special event decorations on Illinois State University property. This document outlines the use of approved materials and methods along with those materials that are specifically prohibited.

Responsibility:

Individuals will be responsible for complying with this resource when decorating their assigned workspace. It will be the responsibility of the host department, unit, or organization to ensure that all decorations for a holiday or for a special event comply with this resource, regardless of whether the event involves the university community, outside vendors, or non-ISU participants. In cases where clarifications are necessary, departments are to contact Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) to discuss decorating plans not less than 72 hours in advance of installation. A representative of EHS may observe the decorations for compliance with this decorating resource, prior to the event.

How and where can you decorate?

- For your safety and that of your colleagues and visitors, keep decorations out of corridors, aisles, and stairways. Do not place decorations over windows or doors. Always keep decorations away from any heat source, particularly office space heaters.
- Do not hang decorations from or decorate in any way that attaches to or obstructs exit doors, exit signs, fire and smoke doors, sprinklers, smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, pull stations, emergency lights and life safety equipment, cameras, and room numbers.
- Maintain visibility to, from and of any exit or exit access.

- Decorations are not to be hung from any ceiling surface. Never lift or remove any ceiling tile without the explicit approval of EHS.
- Bulletin boards, posters, and paper attached directly to the wall shall not exceed 20 percent of the aggregate wall area to which they are applied.
- **Candles and any other open flame devices or decorations are prohibited.** Electrical or battery-operated candles are an appropriate alternative.
- **Prohibited Materials (include but are not limited to):**

Hay	Flammable Liquids	Flammable Powders
Dry Moss	Corn Stalks	Corn Shucks
Straw	Bulk Cotton Batting	Confetti
Flock	Dry Leaves	

- Use of any combustible material (e.g., cardboard, wrapping paper and streamers), more than 20 percent aggregate of the wall area and up to 50 percent aggregate of the wall area, shall be treated with a fire-retardant spray that slows down or stops the spread of fire or reduces its intensity. Fire-retardant spray is available for purchase online.
- Keep all packaging for decorations whereby fire resistant or flame-retardant properties can be documented.

Natural and Artificial Vegetation

Natural cut decorative vegetation (e.g., wreaths, trees, hay bales, corn stalks, etc.) are prohibited in University Buildings

- Artificial trees and greenery must be labeled “fire resistant,” “flame retardant,” or similarly indicating that the material used is non-combustible or resistive to burning. Artificial greenery should also be UL listed.
- Artificial trees used indoors must be less than or equal to six feet tall. Any tree exceeding six feet tall shall not be used without written approval from the EHS. Trees shall not extend higher than twenty-four (24) inches below the ceiling.

- Artificial trees must be located away from exits and paths to exits, being careful not to block doors, aisles, corridors, equipment, or access to facilities.
- Keep artificial trees away from heat sources such as air vents, large appliances, and lights.

Recycled Materials

Consider use of decorations that are made of recyclable materials that can be recycled or reused for a different event.

- Consider decorations that were purchased secondhand or are current items around the office, borrowed, etc.
- Consider reusing decorations for future events – such as banners, fabric, signage, paper goods, etc. (with appropriate fire-retardant treatment).
- Chalkboard Banner: <https://a.co/d/adRxtm3>
- Chalkboard Signs: <https://a.co/d/adRxtm3>
- Message Boards: <https://a.co/d/j98hEYV>
- LED lights: <https://a.co/d/5kLpC7s>
- Wool Felt Garland: <https://a.co/d/ffdxpdj>



- Repurposing items, such as the attached (plastic) chip bag into streamers or University T-shirts into a banner.





- Also attached are a couple “construction” creations – these are fun decorating ideas in which you can donate the cans and boxes afterwards.
- Items that are reusable/intended for other purposes (Ex: an office purchased a red banner that could also be used for other departmental events such as back to school events, graduation, retirement lunches, etc.) or secondhand/something used at the office in the building already but serving a different purpose as a decoration.
- Paper, cardboard, recyclable materials (within a certain %) that have been treated.

Use of Building Power Sources

- Do not overload electrical outlets.
- An outlet is best, but you may use a single power strip, if necessary. Ensure it is UL 1363 listed and surge protected.
- Cannot reach an outlet? Move closer. Do not use extension cords or "piggyback" with multiple power strips plugged in to one another. **This is a serious safety hazard and OSHA violation!**
- Multi plug adapters are prohibited. Plugging extension cords into power strips/surge protectors is prohibited.
- Protect wires from damage. Do not run wires under carpet, through doorways and walls, above ceilings or across aisles or corridors. Do not place wires where they will be walked on or potentially tripped over. Do not use nails or tacks to hang wires.
- Do not use outlets designated for emergency purposes. They are reserved for critical needs on the emergency power circuit.

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- Check carefully to verify there are no loose or damaged outlets. Ensure they have a cover plate in place.

Decorative Lighting

- When decorating with light strings, **LED lights are preferred** and will eventually be required as incandescent bulb string lights will no longer be available (**Note: The federal ban on the sale of incandescent light bulbs took effect on August 1, 2023.**)
- Labels must confirm they are for indoor use and bear the Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) or Factory Mutual (FM) marks.
- LED light strings must be in good condition. Any set that is worn, frayed or in any condition that could result in a shock hazard, must be discarded.
- Connect no more than two (2) sets of LED lights together.
- Use electrical tape, Command Strips, or suction cup-type hooks instead of staples, tacks, nails, or paper tape.
- Ensure lights do not contact items such as paper, packages, and cloth.
- Turn off all holiday lights before leaving the area and at the end of the workday.