



This document was developed in collaboration with the following groups: Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC), Fire Safety and Facility Maintenance/Building Services.

This document is intended to provide guidance on IPAC best practice recommendations for events, festivities and holiday decorations in health care facilities. Although decorations do not pose a high risk for transmission, they may harbor dust and microorganisms and therefore, the type of decorations, location(s), how they will be displayed and storage must all be considered to ensure staff, public and *patient safety.

*In this document, the term patient is inclusive of patient, resident and client.

Decorations

Selection:

1. Choose laminated/plastic/wipeable decorations.
2. All decorations must be labeled as Fire Retardant (i.e., Canadian Standards Association (CSA) and Underwriters Laboratories of Canada (ULC) tags) or have documentation supporting the flame resistance including artificial trees and wreaths, and electrified/lighted decorative items. Spray-on flame-retardants are prohibited.
3. Spray-on fake snow is not allowed to be used within health care.
4. Live trees requiring water and/or soil, glass baubles and tinsel are not allowed.
5. For those facilities allowing lights to be used for decorative purposes, Christmas tree lights and electrical displays must be checked by Maintenance before use. Only LED lighting with proper CSA, ULC, SaskPower approval or other approved certification will be approved. All must be identified for indoor use. All electrical displays must have an identifier on the cord confirming they have been checked by Maintenance.
6. The use of any extension cords must be reviewed with Maintenance.
7. Discard/replace decorations that are damaged or worn.

Display:

1. Decorations should be limited to one single, common area within a unit/department/facility (i.e., waiting rooms, family spaces) to ensure effective cleaning schedules can be maintained. Cleaning is a shared responsibility between unit staff, environmental services and others.
2. Decorations should not be placed on high touch or regularly cleaned surfaces (such as handrails). Do not decorate the workstations on wheels or other mobile electronic devices.
3. Decorations should not interfere with regular clinical or housekeeping duties and are not to obstruct clinical signs, access to personal protective equipment or hand hygiene locations.
4. Decorations are best in locations out of public reach. If there are concerns with public handling the decorations, move them out of public reach or remove them altogether.
5. Decorations shall not be suspended from the ceiling, ceiling tiles or ceiling fixtures including sprinkler heads or smoke detectors.
6. Decorations attract dust, and so must not be suspended from walls indiscriminately. It is advised to utilize existing peg boards. (Decorations stuck/adhered to walls or ceilings can leave a residue when the item is removed which compromises cleanliness).
7. Artificial trees cannot be displayed within an exit or access to exit corridor.
8. The use of decorations and/or materials in a means of egress is prohibited in any health care facility. This includes seasonal decorations.
9. Ensure that decorations do not obstruct or interfere with any exit routes or fire separation doors.
10. Ensure that all corridors and hallways, including those inside work areas are open, clear, and provide the required unobstructed egress width.



11. Decorations must not block or obstruct portable fire extinguishers, exit signs, pull stations, fire alarm strobes, fire hose cabinets, and smoke detectors.
12. Follow your facilities protocols for all electrical lights and displays. If permitted:
 - a. All holiday lights shall be turned off before leaving the area and at the end of the workday.
 - b. The use of holiday lights and electric ornaments in corridors and over exit doors is prohibited. Wiring shall not be strung through doors or ceilings or be placed under carpeting.
 - c. The use of extension cords is discouraged however, if approved for use for Maintenance/Building Services, extension cords for temporary lighting such as seasonal decorations must be tagged as ULC or CSA approved, be no longer than 3m/10Ft and MUST only be plugged into Ivory colored, normal power plugs.
 - d. No piggybacking (multiple power strips plugged into each other). If possible, plug the light strand directly into a power outlet.
 - e. No more than three sets of holiday lights shall be connected together or as per the manufacturer's instructions.
 - f. Before use, light strings should be carefully checked to ensure there are no loose sockets and that wires are not frayed or damaged.
13. Any open flame, including candles is prohibited. As an option, an electric candle may be used.
14. Holiday decorations of any kind must not be placed in the following areas:
 - a. Clean and dirty service rooms
 - b. Medication rooms
 - c. Inpatient rooms, treatment/procedure rooms
 - d. Operating room theatres and other semi-restricted zones
 - e. Sterile reprocessing areas or any area used for sterile supply storage
15. Decorations are discouraged on outbreak units.
16. Patients/families may choose to decorate their own room with cards; however, they should be advised to minimize clutter to allow for adequate environmental cleaning.
17. Patients may receive purchased floral arrangements however, families are asked to consult with managers and staff prior to placing orders for delivery and to follow existing scent-free policies.
18. All plants (dried or alive) are to be kept away from high risk areas where there are immunocompromised individuals (i.e., nursery, OR, ICU, PACU, Chemo and Dialysis) this includes patient rooms and the unit/department as a whole (e.g., nursing stations, med rooms etc.). This includes poinsettias during the Christmas season.

Storage and Handling:

1. To minimize dust accumulation and contact with dirty surfaces during storage:
 - a. Decorations must be stored in lidded plastic containers and labeled.
 - b. Christmas trees must be stored in a box and wrapped in plastic film and labeled.
2. Decorations should be wiped with a hospital-grade cleaning and disinfectant wipe (e.g., Accel Intervention) to aid in dust removal prior to storage, and again prior to being displayed.
3. All other decorations including lights may be cleaned annually with a damp cloth and mild detergent.
4. Christmas trees that cannot be cleaned must be replaced:
 - a. at least every five years
 - b. or following an outbreak
5. Perform hand hygiene before and after handling decorations.



Patient/Family Celebrations

1. All family members/support people must follow the [Family Presence during a Pandemic Policy Directive](#) and accompanying documents and [Public Health Order](#).
2. Family can bring external food (commercially prepared and homemade) to patients, however it cannot be shared with any other patient or staff member at this time. Additional considerations include:
 - a. Site/unit staff need to determine how to get the food from the family to the patient, considering current site visitor restrictions and usual safe food handling practices.
 - b. Instruct families to check with site or unit management as to their capacity to receive deliveries and if a delivery can be coordinated.
 - c. Any delivery needs to be in clean packaging that can be wiped and arranged prior with the site.
 - d. Deliveries are to be for an individual patient and labelled with the patient's name.
3. General food donations are not accepted for non-specific patients.
4. Only new and packaged donated decorations and gifts should be accepted.
5. All donations that have been wrapped by volunteers should be quarantined in a clean room for 24 hours prior to handling by the recipient.¹
6. For present wrapping, it is advised that volunteers wear a procedure mask, perform hand hygiene prior to handling the gifts and are in an area where no patients can be found (i.e., meeting rooms etc.).
7. For Santa visits, Santa must:
 - be an SHA staff member who has completed health screening.
 - wear a procedure mask.
 - refrain from allowing the child to sit on his lap. Children may sit on a chair near Santa. The chair must be disinfected between uses. Physical distancing must be maintained.
 - perform hand hygiene using alcohol based hand rub in between children. Gloves must not be worn.
8. Cookie decorating, communal cooking/baking, sharing of food that is not individually packaged, and potlucks are not allowed at this time. Note: acceptable foodstuffs to share include purchased, individually wrapped chocolates and candies etc.
9. For events where parents and children are able to pick out a donated gift for one another, it is advised that everyone in the space perform hand hygiene upon entry and exit, wear a mask (if tolerated) and maintain a physical distance of two metres between other families and staff.

Workspace/Staff Celebrations

1. SHA staff must not accept donated food for personal consumption and/or distribute donated food to other SHA staff.
2. Staff may bring food from home or other external sources (e.g., restaurant take-out) for personal consumption, however it must not be shared.
3. Staff may have external food delivered (e.g., pizza) but only for personal consumption; it must not be shared.
4. Group food events (e.g., potlucks) should not occur.
5. Physical distancing of 2 metres shall be maintained in all staff break, lounge, or eating areas
 - Each staff member shall perform hand hygiene before and after eating
 - Stagger eating times/location to maintain physical distancing.

The holidays are an emotive and difficult time for people to be in health care facilities. Therefore, it is important to maintain a balance between the recommendations made in this document with the needs of our patients, residents and clients. Any request outside of these recommendations need to be discussed with Health and Safety/Fire Advisors/Infection Prevention and Control and staff.

Any further questions or concerns can be directed to your local Infection Prevention and Control.



References:

1. Government of Saskatchewan. Re-Open Saskatchewan Plan [Internet]. 2020 [cited 2020 October 25]. Available from:
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2. Alberta Health Services. Seasonal Decorations, Costumes, Celebrations and Donations Information Sheet [Internet]. 2020 [cited 2020 December 3]. Available from:
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