

To: Building Coordinators  
From: Todd Houts, Director  
Date: November 15, 2023  
Subject: Fresh Cut Trees/Foliage and Seasonal Decorations in University Buildings,  
Residence Halls, and Family Student Housing

*(Note: This policy does not apply to the University of Missouri Healthcare System.)*

With the calendar year coming to an end, it's that time of year to review safety procedures for use of fresh cut trees/foliage and other seasonal decorations in University facilities.

Fresh cut natural trees and evergreen decorations must be sprayed with a fire-retardant material\*. Live trees may not be used in unsprinklered facilities.

Seasonal decorations may be put up no earlier than November 22, 2023, and must be removed from the site on or before January 8, 2024. All trees/foliage and other decorations in residence halls and family student housing that will be unoccupied during the semester break should be disposed of before December 15, 2023. If trees or other decorations become dry before these dates, they must be removed immediately. Please remember that the danger of fire increases each day the tree is up. Seasonal lights should be inspected for loose connections, broken or cracked sockets, or frayed or bare wires. Using LED lights is recommended due to low heat generation and energy efficiency.

If you have any questions concerning this information, please email us at [ehs@missouri.edu](mailto:ehs@missouri.edu) or call our main number, 573-882-7018.

Please distribute this letter and attachment to the appropriate persons in your department/building.

Attachment

cc: Ed Knollmeyer  
Colleen Lamond  
Pete Millier  
Tyler Page  
Benjamin Knapp

\* The MU Forestry Club will provide this service upon request when purchasing trees during their annual sale, December 2-3, 8 am-4pm, South Farm, 3600 East New Haven Road.

## **SAFETY PROCEDURES FOR THE USE OF FRESH CUT TREES/FOLIAGE AND SEASONAL DECORATIONS IN UNIVERSITY FACILITIES**

(Does not apply to University of Missouri Healthcare System)

### **Fresh Cut and Live Trees/Foliage**

1. All natural trees and evergreen boughs set up in University facilities are to be sprayed with a fire retardant material (this does not apply to “U.L. Listed” artificial trees labeled as “Fire Resistant”).
2. When purchasing a fresh cut tree, be sure the tree and/or boughs are not dried out. To check, grasp a branch about 6” from the end and firmly slide it between your fingers to the tip. If the tree is fresh, no needles will come off. No red cedar trees or red cedar boughs are to be used under any circumstances due to their fast drying nature.
3. After purchasing a tree, keep it in water and outside the facility until the time you set it up. When you are ready to display it, saw approximately 2” off the bottom of the trunk to assist in absorption of water.
4. Be sure the tree is placed in a sturdy, broad-based stand which will hold water and be sure to keep water in the stand at all times. Check water level daily.
5. There will be no designated drop-off/pickup location on campus property for disposal of fresh cut trees. Do not put trees in dumpsters or outside on the curb, in the yard, or other locations. The City of Columbia provides drop-off locations for recycling. For details, go to <https://www.como.gov/utilities/columbias-solid-waste-utility/holiday-recycling-and-trash-collection/>

### **Other Seasonal Decorations**

1. Large seasonal decorations must not be placed near a stairway, radiator, exit, hallway, or any other location where the tree/decoration, if standing or fallen, would block an escape route, signage or increase fire risk.
2. Check to see that artificial trees are Underwriters’ Laboratories (U.L.) listed and labeled “Fire Resistant”.
3. Only use lighting that is listed by U.L. or another independent testing laboratory. Before putting lights on trees or other decorations, inspect for frayed cords, loose connections, broken sockets, exposed wires and general safety. Follow the manufacturer’s guidelines for the maximum number of lights on any one circuit. LED lights are recommended. Do not use real candles or other open flames as a part of any seasonal decoration.
4. Turn off and unplug all decorative lights when there is no one to monitor them.
5. Electric tree lights are not to be used on metallic trees due to the ever present danger of electrocution.
6. Avoid use of electrical extension cords if possible and never use them for periods exceeding 30 days. Never run extension cords under rugs, behind or beneath furniture.

We encourage you to contact Environmental Health & Safety if you have questions or need additional information at 882-7018 or <http://ehs.missouri.edu/ehs/fire/seasonal-decorations>