

Your Direct Link to Better Risk Management Practices

General Liability

In this section of Risk Review, our risk management experts highlight important information, tips and recommendations as they relate to safety and security issues that could arise at your practice or facility.

Healthcare Holiday Safety

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If your office practice or healthcare facility is decorating for the holidays, here are a few suggestions for maintaining a safe environment while celebrating the season.

- Combustible natural decorations such as straw, hay, corn fodder, dried flowers, bamboo, live trees, natural wreaths, and other similar decorations pose a significant fire hazard (see video of a Christmas tree fire) and are not to be used.
- Combustible decorations (e.g., paper snowflakes, crepe paper, etc.) cannot be placed on ceilings, walls, and/or floors in such quantities to affect flame spread ratings.
- The burning of candles or the use of any open flame is prohibited.
- Decorations are not to be mounted or hung on safety appliances such as fire sprinkler heads, smoke detectors, emergency lights, emergency annunciator panels, etc.
- Decorations may not be placed in any manner which obstructs or hides a means of egress/emergency exit, fire extinguishers, or any other safety equipment.
- Holiday lights and electrical decorations need to be restricted from use in patient care areas. If electrical decorations are used in non-patient care areas, they need to be UL (Underwriter's Laboratory) approved, installed in accordance with manufacturer's instructions, and inspected for damage prior to use.
- Electrical decorations are to be plugged directly into an outlet. Extension cords are not to be used.

- Lights and electrical decorations need to be de-energized when the area is not occupied.

- If the area being decorated can be occupied by children, the decorations must be evaluated for a choking hazard and other safety concerns such as sharp edges, electrical shock, pinch points, entrapment, and the like.

- While it may be tempting to put out holiday treats for patients and visitors, we would suggest refraining from this practice because many people have severe food allergies, as well as some treats posing a choking risk to small children.

- It is becoming popular to enhance the atmosphere by introducing various holiday scents into the air, but we would suggest against this practice in the health care environment because there are many individuals who are highly sensitive to the chemicals used in this process and exposure to these products could trigger an acute, yet severe, allergic reaction.

By following the practices above, individuals in the healthcare system will still be able to celebrate the holiday season while ensuring a safe and healthy environment.

Happy Holidays to all. ❖



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suggestions are welcome.
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