



## COUNTY OF PRINCE WILLIAM

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DEPARTMENT OF  
FIRE & RESCUE

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Chief

### HOLIDAY DECORATIONS

The following fire prevention code regulations shall apply to holiday, Christmas, and all other decorative vegetation. These regulations are in conformance with the 2003 International Fire Code.

#### CHRISTMAS TREES

1. Natural cut trees are prohibited in the following occupancies or portions of an occupancy designated as:
  - Assembly (includes restaurants, churches, community halls, etc.).
  - Educational (includes schools, some day cares).
  - Institutional (hospitals, nursing homes, some assisted living, some day cares).
  - Mercantile (department stores, retail or wholesale stores, service stations, sales rooms, grocery stores).
  - Residential 1 and 4 (hotels, motels, dormitories, small assisted living buildings). Single-family residential (including townhouses), apartments, and condominium buildings **ARE NOT** included.

**Exception:** Trees located in areas protected by an approved automatic sprinkler system shall not be prohibited in assembly, educational, mercantile, or residential occupancies except residential care/assisted living facilities with more than 5 but less than 16 occupants, excluding staff.
2. Natural cut trees, where permitted, shall have the trunk bottoms cut off at least .5 inches above the original cut and shall be placed in a support device that:
  - Holds the tree securely and is of adequate size to avoid tipping over of the tree.
  - Is capable of containing a minimum two-day supply of water.
  - The water level, when full, shall cover the tree stem at least two inches. The water level shall be maintained above the fresh cut and checked at least once daily.

3. The tree shall be removed from the building whenever needles or leaves fall off readily when a tree branch is shaken or if the needles are brittle and break when bent between the thumb and index finger. The tree shall be checked daily for dryness.
4. Candles and open flames shall not be used on or near decorative vegetation. Natural cut trees shall be kept from heat vents and open flame or heat-producing devices by a distance at least equal to the height of the tree.
5. Artificial trees are permitted provided they are flame resistant or flame retardant and listed by a recognized testing laboratory, i.e., Underwriter's Laboratories (UL), Factory Mutual (FM), etc.
6. Trees or other decorations shall not be located so as to obstruct or restrict any exit, exit stair, corridor, passageway, or grade exit lobby. The required **width** of any portion of a means of egress shall not be obstructed by decorative vegetation (precludes trees in most exit-way systems). Trees located in any part of the exit-way system shall be secured or anchored to prevent the tree from being accidentally knocked over by pedestrian traffic.

### **CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTS AND OTHER LIGHTING DECORATIONS**

1. Christmas tree lights and other lighting decorations shall be listed by a recognized testing laboratory, i.e., Underwriters Laboratories (UL), Factory Mutual (FM), etc.
2. Lights with loose sockets, frayed or bare wires, or which produce excessive heat or other dangerous conditions are prohibited.
3. The use of electrical wiring and lighting on metal artificial trees shall be prohibited.
4. Christmas tree lights and other lighting decorations may be used in other decorative applications providing contact is not made with any flammable or combustible materials or any component of the exit-way system is obstructed.

### **WREATHS, GREENERY, AND OTHER DECORATIONS**

1. Natural wreaths shall be acceptable for use on the exterior of the building only.
2. Artificial wreaths, greenery, and **all** other decorations such as, but not limited to, tree ornaments, tinsel, garland, cotton batting, tree skirts, etc. shall be of approved flame retardant or flame resistant materials or non-combustible. Flame resistant decorations are approved for assembly, educational, institutional, and residential occupancies only.

**Exception:** Only non-combustible or flame retardant decorations are approved

for institutional occupancies of I-1 and I-2 (hospitals, nursing homes, and assisted living facilities).

3. The permissible amount of flame-resistant decorative materials shall not exceed 10 percent of the aggregate area of walls, doors, and ceilings.

**Exception:** In auditoriums of Group A, the permissible amount of flame resistant decorative material shall not exceed 50 percent of the aggregate area of walls, doors, and ceiling where the building is equipped throughout with an automatic sprinkler system.

4. Wreaths, greenery, and other decorations shall not be located so as to obstruct or pose a hazard to any component of the exit-way.
5. Christmas tree lights and other lighting decorations are not permitted on doors.

### **OPEN FLAME DEVICES (includes candles, kerosene lamps, etc.)**

1. Open flame decorative devices shall comply with the following:
  - Class I and Class II liquids and LP gas shall not be used.
  - Liquid or solid-fueled devices containing more than eight ounces of fuel must self-extinguish and not leak fuel at a rate of more than .25 teaspoon per minute if tipped over.
  - The device or holder shall be constructed to prevent the spillage of liquid fuel or wax at a rate of more than .25 teaspoon per minute when the device or holder is not in the upright position.
  - The device or holder shall be designed so that it will return to the upright position after being tilted to an angle of 45 degrees from vertical. **Exception:** Devices that self-extinguish if tipped over.
  - The flame shall be enclosed except where openings on the side are not more than .375 inch diameter.
  - Chimneys shall be of non-combustible material.
  - Shades, where used, shall be of non-combustible material and securely attached to the open-flame device holder or chimney.
  - Open flames shall not be located on or near decorative material or similar combustible materials.
  - Candles are prohibited in areas where occupants stand or in an aisle or exit. **Note:** This pertains not only to exit aisles and fire exits but to **all** aisles and exits.
  - Handheld candles shall not be passed from one person to another while lighted.

Contact the office at (703) 792-6360, Monday through Friday, between 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. if you have any questions.

November 2005

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