

Decorations Policy

University of Oklahoma
Norman Campus

Assuring the safety of OU employees, students, visitors, and facilities is the reason for establishing the year-round Decorations Policy. Your cooperation in following these guidelines, regardless of the reason or season, is greatly appreciated.

General Guidelines

- Only those materials labeled as *noncombustible*, *flame-resistant*, or *flame-retardant* should be used.
- Do not block or obscure exits, passageways to exits, or exit and emergency lights.
- Keep all materials away from heat sources.

Prohibited Materials

These materials *may not be used* for decorations under *any* circumstances, because they are inherently combustible or cannot be flameproofed:

- Bamboo
- Cedar Trees or Branches
- Corn Stalks or Shucks
- Cotton or Confetti
(loose, in large quantities)
- Dry Moss or Leaves
- Flammable Powders or Liquids
- Hay or Straw (loose or baled)
- Paper Streamers (serpentine)
- Plastic Sheeting or Pellets
- Sawdust
- Tumbleweeds
- Wood Bark or Shavings

Trees & Greens

General: *Evergreen varieties* (no cedar) of trees and green cuttings are permissible, subject to the following restrictions.

Live Trees: Live trees are those which are burlap-balled or potted. When used indoors, they must be less than 6' tall. Water live trees frequently to

keep the soil moist to the touch. If trees or greens turn brown or begin to shed many needles, they should immediately be disposed of properly.

Cut Trees: Cut trees *may not be used* in any facility on the Norman campus because they are so combustible and difficult to maintain in acceptable condition that they are impractical.

Artificial Trees: Only those artificial trees labeled as *flame-resistant*, *flame-retardant*, or similarly may be used. It is very important that the material used in these trees be noncombustible or resistive to burning.



Greens: Evergreen (no cedar) cuttings may be used in limited quantities.

- Locate trees and greens away from exits and passageways to exits—being careful not to block doors, aisles, corridors, equipment, or access to facilities.
- Keep trees and greens away from heat sources (such as radiators, air vents, large appliances, and light receptacles). Do not smoke near trees or greens.
- Cuttings used for door adornment, corridor or stairwell decorations, or in any other location in public areas (other than as table centerpieces) shall be *flameproofed* by flocking or other treatment.

Electric Lights

- Every electric light set and extension cord used inside our facilities must bear the *Underwriters' Laboratories (UL)* or *Factory Mutual (FM)* label and be marked for **indoor** use.
- Inspect each set of lights—new or old—for broken/cracked sockets, frayed/bare wires, and loose connections. Repair any damage before using or discard the damaged set. Replace broken/damaged lamps/bulbs. Unplug the set prior to changing lamps/bulbs or performing any repairs.
- Use no more than three sets of lights per extension cord.
- Do not overload electrical outlets (cube taps are prohibited).
- Protect the electrical wires from damage. Do not run wires under carpet, through doorways, or where they will be walked on. Do not use nails or tacks to hang wires. Properly secure and protect any wires that cross aisles or corridors.
- Do **not** place electric lights on metallic trees—use spotlights for illumination.
- Decorate the tree first, and plug in the lights last. Lamps/bulbs should not touch the tree or other decorations.
- Turn the lights off whenever the area is unattended.

Costumes

Commercial costumes should be used whenever possible. Where homemade costumes are used, a flameproofing solution should be applied to lightweight or combustible fabrics and materials. Extra care should be taken

when wearing costumes around any source of heat.

Open Flames, Candles, & Lanterns

Open Flames: Lighting devices using open flames (such as tiki lamps, oil lamps, and torches, etc.) are *absolutely prohibited indoors* and must be approved for outdoor use by the OU Fire Marshal on a case-by-case basis.

Enclosed Flames: Devices using controlled or enclosed flames (such as candles and lanterns) are *prohibited in student housing and may not normally be used for decoration anywhere*. Limited use of open flame devices may be permitted only under certain conditions as explained below.



Ceremonies: Open flame devices necessary for ceremonial purposes are permitted but must be arranged to minimize direct contact with or exposure to combustible materials so as to avoid injury to users and persons in attendance. Open flame devices used in this manner must be supervised at all times when lighted and must be extinguished as soon as possible after the ceremony has concluded.

Cooking & Dining: Any outdoor cooking done in conjunction with decorative events shall utilize suitable outdoor cooking appliances manufactured/intended for that purpose and placed an adequate distance from any decorations.

Open flames used in preparation of food at tableside (including but not limited to Sterno tins, votive warming candles, and *flambe* techniques) shall be lighted only by authorized catering staff, who must remain present until the flames are extinguished. Direct contact with or exposure to combustible materials shall be avoided to eliminate the possibility of injury to staff or persons attending the event.

A fire extinguisher or other means of fire suppression shall be provided on or at each cart or other equipment on which open flame devices are kept or transported.

Open flame devices used to keep food warm (including but not limited to Sterno tins and votive candles) may be used provided that shielding is erected to prevent direct contact with or exposure to combustibles, including the clothing of persons attending the event. Catering or event staff shall monitor such devices with sufficient frequency to ensure that overheating does not occur. Each device shall be extinguished as soon as possible after the need is concluded.

Candles for use at occupied dining tables (including but not limited to those known as *restaurant* candles) are permitted; however, when used, they shall be completely enclosed in a tip-resistant, noncombustible container so as to be self-righting if placed in a freestanding position. Such candles must be positioned to minimize direct contact with or exposure to combustible materials so as to avoid injury to staff and diners. Such candles should be lighted only by authorized staff and must be extinguished as soon as possible after the table is vacated or the event is concluded.

Use of combustible decorations is strongly discouraged, and noncombustible alternatives should be fully explored and exhausted before combustible materials are used. Combustible decorations may be used for table centerpieces when they are deemed essential to the theme of the event and no suitable alternative can be identified. Combustible decorations will be limited to no more than one piece to a table seating five or fewer and no more than two pieces to a table seating six or more.

A *restaurant* candle, as described above, may be used in conjunction with a centerpiece including combustible materials, although such use is discouraged. All of the requirements outlined above must be met fully.

Moods & Scents: Small candles may be used for decorative or *mood* purposes **with the permission of the budget unit head or authorized**

manager. When used, such candles shall be of the type where burning is inherently controlled, of a size which resists tipping or upset, or completely enclosed in a tip-resistant, noncombustible container constructed to be self-righting if placed in a free-standing position. Candles must be positioned to minimize direct contact with or exposure to combustible materials and to avoid injury through direct or radiant heat exposure. Candles should be lighted only when persons are present in the space within which they are used and shall be extinguished whenever the space is unoccupied—even momentarily.

Use of scented candles or incense can be done only at the discretion of authorized budget unit heads or managers.

If used, incense may be burned only when a person is physically present in the immediate area. Cone incense must be burned in a noncombustible container on a noncombustible surface with adequate insulating properties to avoid damage to the surface on which it is placed. Stick incense must be burned in such a manner that hot ashes do not contact any combustible material or cause damage to any surface upon which they fall.

Removal

All decorations should be removed as soon as practical after the event for which they were used. Indoor holiday decorations should be removed prior to closing for the Winter Holiday & Break period.

Outdoors

Decorations used on the exterior of OU facilities or outdoors must be coordinated with and approved by the University Fire Marshal.

Fire Services

Additional information is available from the University Fire Marshal in the Department of Risk Management. Please phone the University Fire Marshal at 325-0545 for flame-proofing solutions, training in fire prevention and extinguishers, and fire inspection services.