LeadingAge® Minnesota

HOLIDAY DECORATING AND LIFE SAFETY CODE COMPLIANCE

Practical checklist for Minnesota nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

Holiday displays can support a welcoming atmosphere while also introducing electrical, fire, and evacuation risks. Use this checklist before installing decorations and throughout the holiday season. The general checklist applies as a safety planning tool; the regulatory authorities differ by facility type.

Nursing Home and Assisted Living Holiday Decorating Safety Checklist

Electrical lights and decorations



- ☐ Use holiday lights and electrical decorations listed or certified by UL or another nationally recognized testing laboratory, such as ETL. Do not use unlisted electrical decorations.
- ☐ Inspect light strings, plugs and cords for damage before installation; remove items with frayed wires, damaged plugs or exposed conductors.
- ☐ Follow the manufacturer's instructions for holiday lighting, including the maximum number of light strands that may be connected together. Never exceed the manufacturer's stated limit.
- ☐ Avoid overloaded outlets or circuits; connect lights directly to permanent receptacles whenever practicable.

Extension cords and power strips



- ☐ Do not use extension cords as a substitute for permanent wiring.
- ☐ Do not use extension cords or plug adapters to power holiday lights and decorations. Consult maintenance staff if the proposed display requires electrical connections other than permanent wall outlets.
- ☐ Use only power strips appropriate to the location and application; do not connect power strips in series.
- ☐ Keep cords away from heat, door openings and travel paths; do not run cords across required exit routes or under rugs.



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Trees, greenery and combustible displays

- [ ] Choose artificial trees and decorations appropriate to the facility's fire-code classification and applicable flame-resistance requirements.
- [ ] Have maintenance or life safety staff review natural trees, cut wreaths, garlands and similar greenery before use; additional restrictions apply in Minnesota assisted living Group I occupancies.
- [ ] Review paper displays, fabric banners and other combustible decorations against applicable occupancy rules and exceptions.
- [ ] Keep decorations away from heaters, ignition sources and other heat-producing equipment; avoid open-flame candle displays.

Corridors, exits and evacuation



- [ ] Keep required exits, corridors, stairs and exit discharge routes unobstructed and at their required clear widths.
- [ ] Do not place trees, gift displays, furniture or storage boxes where they narrow required evacuation routes.
- [ ] Maintain visibility of exit signs and emergency lighting; make sure doors open, close and latch properly.
- [ ] Keep exterior emergency exits and exit routes accessible, including snow and ice removal.

Fire protection equipment and ongoing review



- [ ] Do not hang decorations from sprinklers or obstruct sprinkler discharge.
- [ ] Keep alarms, smoke detectors, pull stations and portable extinguishers visible, operable and accessible.
- [ ] Do not interfere with fire or smoke doors, closing devices or fire-rated barriers.
- [ ] Assign staff to approve, inspect and promptly correct or remove unsafe displays; communicate expectations to residents and families.



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Minnesota Assisted Living: Additional Requirements

Minnesota licensed assisted living facilities must evaluate decorations under Minn. Stat. § 144G.45, applicable rules in Chapter 4659, and the Minnesota State Fire Code (Minn. Rules Chapter 7511, incorporating the 2018 International Fire Code with Minnesota amendments). Requirements can also vary by the building's approved occupancy classification.

- ☐ Confirm whether the affected space is classified as Group I-1, Group I-2, Group R or another occupancy before applying occupancy-specific decorating restrictions.
- ☐ In Group I occupancies, do not install natural or resin-bearing Christmas trees or prohibited cut natural decorative vegetation; consult the applicable Section 806 text for the precise scope and exceptions.
- ☐ Check combustible hanging decorations against Section 807 material limitations, coverage limits and occupancy-specific exceptions; do not assume the 20% provision applies to every wall display.
- ☐ Do not store combustible holiday supplies or packaging in corridors or exit stairs, and maintain all required means of egress continuously available.
- ☐ Respect residents' rights to furnish and decorate their living units while addressing actual fire and building-safety requirements; offer safer alternatives when needed.
- ☐ For dementia-care settings, evaluate displays for risks such as loose cords, tripping hazards or potentially unsafe objects, consistent with applicable facility requirements.

For uncertain displays, consult the facility's designated fire safety personnel and the authority having jurisdiction.
A federal nursing home K-Tag should not be presented as the regulatory citation for a Minnesota-only assisted living facility.

Important: This educational checklist does not replace the adopted code text, facility-specific occupancy determinations or directions from the authority having jurisdiction. Some checklist items are recommended preventive practices rather than independent code requirements.

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