



DHMH

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Office of Health Care Quality

Spring Grove Center • Bland Bryant Building

55 Wade Avenue • Catonsville, Maryland 21228-4663

Martin O'Malley, Governor – Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor – John M. Colmers, Secretary

TRANSMITTAL

TO: Nursing Home Administrators

FROM: Wendy Kronmiller, Director, Office of Health Care Quality

RE: Holiday Decorations in Health Care Facilities

DATE: October 31, 2008

With the holiday season fast approaching, health care facilities are beginning to decorate for the occasion. While we hesitate to invite the inevitable comparison to Scrooge, we do want to be sure that such decorations are safe. Fortunately, if you follow the directions below, you may lift people's spirits with decorations while avoiding a regulatory lump of coal.

The 2000 edition of the Life Safety Code, section 19.7.5.4 and section 19.7.5.6 of the 2006 edition of the Life safety Code states that:

Combustible decorations shall be prohibited in any health care occupancy unless they are flame retardant. The only exception to this code requirement is: Combustible decorations such as photographs and paintings, in such limited quantities that a hazard of fire development or spread is not present. The decorations must be labeled as fire retardant or the container they came in must state the decorations are flame retardant. Decorative lighting such as string type Christmas lights shall be U/L approved/listed. Electric lights shall not be used on a metal artificial tree. Flame producing devices, such as, but not limited to, candles, may not be used on or near any type of tree. The facility must be able to show OHCQ Health Facility surveyors or Life Safety Code/Fire Safety Inspectors, the flame retardant statement on the decoration or the container that it was packaged in.

The fact that the health care occupancy is protected by a full automatic sprinkler system does not change or void this code requirement.

Chapter-6, FRESH CUT AND LIVE TREE FIRE SAFETY REGULATIONS, Public safety Article 6-206, Regulation-.03, Display-.04, Paragraph-B, states that: live or fresh cut trees may not be displayed in nursing homes, hospitals or limited care facilities. Residential Board and Care Occupancies, (Assisted Living Facilities) may display live or fresh cut trees only if they are protected by an approved full automatic sprinkler system. Artificial trees are permitted if it is labeled or otherwise identified or

certified as flame retardant or flame resistant by a testing laboratory recognized by the Office of the State Fire Marshal.

Holiday decorations, corkboard with memos, decorations attached to the corridor wall shall not exceed 20% of the wall surface.

If you have questions regarding this information, contact Michael Bond in the Office of the State Fire Marshal at 410-653-8986 or at mbond@mdsp.org.

#NH-08-0004

cc: Long-Term Care Surveyors
Ombudsman