



Holiday Edition

The DBSC and the OFPC wish you, your families, and your communities a happy and safe holiday season. Holiday decorations, candles, natural cut trees, and holiday lighting can cause fires when not used properly. Useful fire safety tips as posted by OFPC/NFPA¹ pertaining to hazards commonly encountered this time of year, can be obtained by clicking these links:

- [Winter Holiday Safety Tips \(OFPC\)](#)
- [Holiday Candle Safety Tips \(OFPC\)](#)
- [Natural Cut Tree Safety \(OFPC\)](#)
- [Winter Holiday Safety \(NFPA\)](#)

In addition to the documents above, below are some additional requirements from the Uniform Code pertaining to hazards commonly encountered this time of year

Decorative Materials

Various Sections of Chapter 8 of the 2020 Fire Code of New York State² (2020 FCNYS) apply to new and existing buildings and contain provisions for interior finish, interior trim, furniture, furnishings, decorative materials, and decorative vegetation. It is encouraged to read the entirety of Chapter 8 to see how it applies in each scenario; however, the following provisions outline some highlights from Chapter 8 pertaining to hazards commonly encountered during the holiday season:

- Natural cut trees are prohibited in the occupancies indicated in Section 806.1.1. There are some exceptions, which are contingent upon compliance with specific fire safety measures and the location of the trees within the building.
- Natural trees “*shall be checked daily for dryness*” in accordance with Section 806.1.3 and be removed from the building as necessary.
- As provided in Section 806.3, “*natural cut trees shall be kept a distance from heat vents and any open flame or heat-producing devices not less than the height of the tree.*” (emphasis added). Additionally, “*candles and open flames shall not be used on or near [natural and artificial] decorative vegetation.*”
- The placement of decorative vegetation shall not obstruct “*the required width of any portion of a means of egress,*” and natural cut trees “*shall not be located within an exit, corridor, or a lobby or vestibule.*” (Section 806.2). Furnishings or other objects “*shall not be placed to obstruct exits, access thereto, egress therefrom or visibility thereof.*” (Section 807.1).
- Artificial decorative vegetation must meet the flame propagation performance criteria of Section 807.4.1.
- The use of “*unlisted electrical wiring and lighting*” on natural vegetation or artificial decorative vegetation is prohibited (see Sections 806.4 and 807.4.2) as well as the “*use of [any] electrical wiring and lighting on artificial trees constructed entirely of metal*” (Section 807.4.2).

Electrical Fixtures and Wiring

Decorating for the holiday season may result in the use of a greater than normal number of electrical fixtures and amount of wiring. Decorative lighting shall be listed where required and be in good condition. Care should be taken to read the manufacturer’s instructions and the recommended number of light strands connected in series should not be exceeded. In addition to the electrical fixtures and wiring provisions found in Sections 806.4 and 807.4.2 noted above, provisions that address the use and maintenance of extension cords, multiplug adapters, and power taps can be found in Sections 604.4 and 604.5 of the 2020 FCNYS and include but are not limited to the following:

- Extension cords (except the approved multiplug extension cords) shall “*serve only one portable appliance.*”
- Extension cords shall be plugged directly into *approved* receptacles, power taps, or multi-plug adapters.
- Extension cords shall “*not be affixed to structures, extended through walls, ceilings or floors, or under doors and floor coverings.*”
- Extension cords shall be protected from environmental damage, physical impact, and free from splices, deterioration, and damage.
- The ampacity of the extension cords shall be not less than the rated capacity of the portable appliance supplied by the cord.
- Extension cords shall be grounded where serving grounded portable appliances.

Means of Egress and Fire Sprinkler Deflectors

In addition to those found in Sections 806.2 and 807.1 noted above, provisions related to maintaining the means of egress in existing buildings can be found in Section 1031 of the 2020 FCNYS. More specifically, the placement of decorative materials and the means of egress can be found in Sections 1031.4 and 1031.6. These sections add the prohibition of impairing the visibility of exit signs and means of egress doors with decorations, among other requirements.

Additionally, fire sprinkler deflectors and spray patterns shall not be blocked or obstructed by decorations (per Chapter 5 of NFPA 25-17, as indicated in Section 901.6.1 of the 2020 FCNYS).

¹ National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). Access to NFPA publications may be found on the NFPA website at <https://www.nfpa.org/>.

² Access to online versions of the 2020 Codes of New York State may be found on the [DBSC](#) website.