

KEEP YOUR CHRISTMAS SAFE

Uniform Fire Code prohibits live Christmas trees and wreaths in educational and assembly occupancies. Churches are classified as assembly occupancies. Some municipalities permit live trees and wreaths in churches if they have been fire-treated and passed a flame test performed by the local fire department. Contact your local fire department, ask if live trees and wreaths can be used in your church, and under what circumstances they might be permitted. Comply with any recommendations and requirements. There is coverage in the self-insurance program for fires involving live Christmas trees, however, it is vitally important that all fire codes are followed.

The following guidelines should be adhered to for use of live Christmas trees and Advent wreaths where permitted by local fire departments:

- ❖ Treated with a fire retardant.
- ❖ At least one inch must be cut from the trunk of the Christmas tree prior to erecting the tree.
- ❖ The tree should be erected in a solid stand, which allows for a healthy amount of water. Water should be added daily.
- ❖ A live Christmas tree should not be displayed on parish premises longer than 15 days.
- ❖ If multiple Christmas trees are used, they should be spaced at least 10 feet apart. Also, trees should not block exits or walkways. Live trees never should be placed near radiators, heat vents, or space heaters. Likewise, trees should not be placed near an open flame (this includes altar candles).
- ❖ Non-combustible ornaments must be used on the Christmas tree.
- ❖ Only lights with the label of an independent testing laboratory should be used. Lights with frayed cords must be discarded.

Below are additional guidelines for the use of Advent wreaths:

- ❖ Candles on Advent wreaths should never be lit when the wreath is unattended. Candles on Advent wreaths must be enclosed in non-tip candle holders. If a candle cannot be safely enclosed and separated from combustible material, it should not be used. The candle holders should not allow hot wax to come in contact with the Advent wreath.
- ❖ Battery-operated artificial candles should be used whenever possible.

10.13.1.1 The requirement of 10.13.1 shall not apply to buildings used on a seasonal basis, or the temporary vacancy of a building for tenant change or remodeling purposes.

10.13.2 All fire protection systems shall be maintained in service in seasonal and vacant buildings, unless otherwise approved by the AHJ.

10.13.2.1* With the approval of the AHJ, fire protection and fire alarm systems in seasonal and vacant buildings shall be permitted to be removed from service.

10.13.2.2 When required by the AHJ, other systems or components pertaining to fire protection shall be maintained.

10.13.3 The AHJ shall have the authority to require an inspection and test of any fire protection system or fire alarm system that has been out of service for 30 days or more before restored back into service.

10.14 Combustible Vegetation.

10.14.1 Combustible vegetation, including natural cut Christmas trees, shall be in accordance with Section 10.14.

10.14.1.1 Christmas tree placement within buildings shall comply with Table 10.14.1.1.

10.14.2 In any occupancy, limited quantities of combustible vegetation shall be permitted where the AHJ determines that adequate safeguards are provided based on the quantity and nature of the combustible vegetation.

10.14.3* Provisions for Fire Retardance for Artificial Vegetation.

10.14.3.1 Artificial vegetation and artificial Christmas trees shall be labeled or otherwise identified or certified by the manufacturer as being fire retardant.

10.14.3.2 Such fire retardance shall be demonstrated by each individual decorative vegetation item, including any decorative lighting, in an approved manner.

10.14.4 Vegetation and Christmas trees shall not obstruct corridors, exit ways, or other means of egress.

10.14.5 Only listed electrical lights and wiring shall be used on natural or artificial combustible vegetation, natural or artificial Christmas trees, and other similar decorations.

10.14.6 Electrical lights shall be prohibited on metal artificial trees.

10.14.7 Open flames such as from candles, lanterns, kerosene heaters, and gas-fired heaters shall not be located on or near combustible vegetation, Christmas trees, or other similar combustible materials.

10.14.8 Combustible vegetation and natural cut Christmas trees shall not be located near heating vents or other fixed or portable heating devices that could cause it to dry out prematurely or to be ignited.

10.14.9 Provisions for Natural Cut Trees.

10.14.9.1 Where a natural cut tree is permitted, the bottom end of the trunk shall be cut off with a straight fresh cut at least 1/2 in. (13 mm) above the end prior to placing the tree in a stand to allow the tree to absorb water.

10.14.9.2 The tree shall be placed in a suitable stand with water.

10.14.9.3 The water level shall be maintained above the fresh cut and checked at least once daily.

Table 10.14.1.1 Provisions for Christmas Trees by Occupancy

Occupancy	No Trees Permitted	Cut Tree Permitted With Automatic Sprinkler Systems	Cut Tree Permitted Without Automatic Sprinkler Systems	Balled Tree Permitted
Ambulatory health care				X
Apartment buildings		Within unit	Within unit	X
Assembly	X			
Board and care	X			
Business		X		X
Day-care		X		X
Detention and correctional	X			
Dormitories	X			
Educational	X			
Health care				X
Hotels	X			
Industrial		X	X	X
Lodging and rooming				X
Mercantile		X		X
One and two family		X	X	X
Storage		X	X	X

10.14.9.4* The tree shall be removed from the building immediately upon evidence of dryness.

10.14.10 Exterior Vegetation.

10.14.10.1 Cut or uncut weeds, grass, vines, and other vegetation shall be removed when determined by the AHJ to be a fire hazard.

10.14.10.2 When the AHJ determines that total removal of growth is impractical due to size or environmental factors, approved fuel breaks shall be established.

10.14.10.3 Designated areas shall be cleared of combustible vegetation to establish the fuel breaks.

10.15 Special Outdoor Events, Carnivals, and Fairs.

10.15.1 Permits. Permits, where required, shall comply with Section 1.12.

10.15.2 The AHJ shall be permitted to regulate all outdoor events such as carnivals and fairs as it pertains to access for