

Risk Management:

Safety & Security Tips during Advent and Christmas

Advent is a wonderful time of preparation and anticipation for the celebration of Christmas. Many parishioners, volunteers and staff will be using the church and parish facilities in the coming weeks: please keep their safety and security in mind. Please use the information below as a resource during the planning process.

Avoid Slips, Trips & Falls:

- Snow and ice accumulation needs to be monitored frequently. The attached Winter Maintenance Log should be used to chart shoveling, salting and sanding activities. It is important to keep an accurate log of your winter ice/snow removal activities and retain these records for three years. (The maintenance log is also available on the Diocese of Winona website: www.dow.org/finance.html#Insurance)
 - Ensure floors are free of cords and other items running through walkways. Ensure rubber backed non-slip mats are provided inside each entrance door.
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Bump up your security:

- Thieves love the holiday season. Keep all windows and doors locked and make sure doorways and parking lots are adequately lit in the evening hours. Designated individuals should patrol the parking lots during mass and during other large events to deter thieves from breaking into the parked vehicles. Remind parishioners to keep their packages out of sight in their vehicles, and remove valuables from coats and purses (if the parish utilizes a coat room).
 - Collection monies tend to increase during the holiday season. Review and practice control guidelines (available in the Diocese of Winona Financial Policies Manual) to make sure the money stays with the church and not in someone else's pockets.
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Decorating - General Requirements and Guidelines:

- During the holidays, Mass attendance increases dramatically. Ensure your overflow crowd does not impede exit pathways or exit doorways. Do not block exits with decorations or trees; allow appropriate egress.
 - Open flame should not be used on or near decorations. Candles used as a part of the celebration of Mass (e.g. Advent wreaths) should be monitored and extinguished upon conclusion of the liturgy.
 - Hospitality Ministers / Greeters / Ushers should be made aware of the location(s) of fire extinguishers should an emergency arise during the liturgy.
 - Candles placed on an Advent wreath should be enclosed in glass; to reduce the risk of fire, use a wreath made of fire retardant materials.
 - Candle wicks should be trimmed to approximately ¼ inch each time before burning.
 - Do not use unlisted electrical wiring and lighting. All holiday lighting must be Underwriter Laboratory (UL) or Factory Mutual (FM) tested, approved and labeled. Holiday lights and electrical cords must be inspected to ensure they are in good condition and are safe to use. Do not allow electrical outlets and circuits to be overloaded with too many lights or other holiday decorations that use electricity. Extension cords, if needed, should be in like new condition and kept to a minimum.
 - If more than one tree is displayed, the recommended distance between trees should be at least 10 feet at the widest point.
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Decorating - Artificial Trees & Plants:

- When selecting a tree or wreath, used products made with certified (labeled) fire retardant artificial materials.
- The use of electrical wiring or lighting on artificial trees constructed entirely of metal is an electrical shock hazard and is not recommended.

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Decorating - Natural-Cut (Live) Trees & Plants:

Please Note: Minnesota state fire code prohibits the display of live trees unless the trees are located in areas protected by an approved automatic sprinkler system. If the parish plans include the utilization of live trees, please consult with the local fire marshal, (or authority having jurisdiction), for approval. If the local fire marshal grants approval, the following requirements should be followed:

- Trees should have the trunk bottoms cut off at least ½ inch above the original cut.
- The support device that holds the tree in an upright position should be stable and secure, plus meet following criteria:
 - The device should be capable of containing a minimum two-day supply of water
 - The water level, when full, should cover the tree stem at least 2 inches. A watering chart is recommended; the water level should be checked twice daily.
- The recommend display period for live trees is 15 days. The tree should be removed from the building whenever needles or leaves fall off readily when a tree branch is shaken or if the needles are brittle and break when bent between the thumb and index finger. (The tree should have a tag placed on the tree indicating the date the tree was erected and who placed the tag on the tree).
- Trees should be kept at least 5 feet from heat vents, open flame or heat-producing devices.

Additional Resources / Questions:

- Additional fire safety information can be found online at www.fire.state.mn.us/FireCode/2007christmastrees.pdf
- A sample Winter Maintenance Log can be found online at www.dow.org/finance.html#Insurance
- The Diocese of Winona Financial Policies and Procedures is online at: www.dow.org/fin_ppm.html
- Please contact Ryan Christianson (Risk Manager, Catholic Mutual Group) with any questions regarding risk management.

*The Risk Management Department at Catholic Mutual
would like to wish you a joyous and safe Christmas Season!!*

