# Holiday Safety Checklist for Houses of Worship



## Use this checklist before your first holiday service.

**Give it to faith leaders, staff, ushers, facilities staff and safety teams. Post a copy where the team can see it.**

**Important:** Local fire codes may have different rules. Check with your local fire marshal or fire code official about candles, trees, and decorations.

### Before the Holiday Season

- ☐ Test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms.
- ☐ Make sure the sprinkler system is working. Keep sprinkler heads clear and do not paint them.
- ☐ Check that all exits are unlocked, clear and easy to see.
- ☐ Review your emergency plan. Make sure it includes exit routes, staff duties and communication with the fire department.
- ☐ Hold a short emergency drill with ushers, staff and safety volunteers.
- ☐ Ask your local fire department about any safety questions before the holiday season begins.

### Holiday Trees and Decorations

- ☐ Use a flame-resistant artificial tree in the sanctuary or other gathering areas, if required by local code.
- ☐ Keep trees, displays and decorations away from exits, hallways, heaters, candles, fire extinguishers, alarms and sprinkler heads.
- ☐ Use flame-resistant or noncombustible decorations when possible.
- ☐ Keep straw, hay, greenery and other materials that can burn away from flames, lights, and heat sources.
- ☐ After decorating, walk every exit route. Make sure nothing blocks or narrows the path.

### Candlelight Services

- ☐ Use sturdy candleholders and drip guards.
- ☐ Keep candles at least 12 inches away from anything that can burn, including greenery, curtains, banners and straw.
- ☐ Do not pass lighted candles from person to person.
- ☐ Do not tilt one candle to light another candle.
- ☐ Keep candles out of aisles and standing areas.
- ☐ Give children flameless candles instead of open-flame candles.
- ☐ Explain candle safety before the service begins.
- ☐ Put out every candle when the service ends.

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## Lights and Electrical Safety

- ☐ Check all light strands before use. Throw away lights with frayed wires, damaged insulation or broken sockets.
- ☐ Use lights that are listed and approved for their intended indoor or outdoor use.
- ☐ Connect no more than three light strands together unless the manufacturer says more are safe.
- ☐ Do not overload outlets, power strips or extension cords.
- ☐ Do not run electrical cords under rugs or across walkways.
- ☐ Turn off lighted displays when no one is present.

## Heating Safety

- ☐ Keep anything that can burn at least 3 feet away from heaters, fireplaces, radiators, wood stoves and similar heat sources.
- ☐ Plug space heaters directly into a wall outlet. Do not use an extension cord.
- ☐ Use space heaters with automatic shut-off features.
- ☐ Turn heaters off when rooms are empty.
- ☐ Confirm that the furnace and chimney have been inspected this year.

## Kitchen and Fellowship Meals

- ☐ Assign someone to watch cooking at all times.
- ☐ Keep children and other non-cooks out of the kitchen while food is cooking.
- ☐ If grease catches fire:
  - Slide a lid over the pan.
  - Turn off the heat if it is safe to do so.
  - Never use water.
  - Never carry a burning pan.
  - Leave the area and call 911 if the fire grows or cannot be controlled safely.

## Crowds and Emergencies

- ☐ Decide before each major service who will:
  - Call 911
  - Direct people to exits
  - Help people with disabilities or mobility needs
  - Communicate with staff and volunteers
- ☐ At large services, briefly point out the nearest exits before the program begins.
- ☐ If there is an emergency, stop the service and begin evacuation. Do not continue the program.
- ☐ Keep aisles, exits, corridors and access to emergency equipment clear at all times.

## Quick Final Check Before Each Service

- ☐ Exits are unlocked, visible and clear.
- ☐ Decorations do not block exits, alarms, extinguishers or sprinkler heads.
- ☐ Candles, lights and heaters are set up safely.
- ☐ Ushers and safety team members know their emergency roles.
- ☐ Emergency phone numbers and first-aid supplies are available.

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**Safety reminder:** This checklist is based on general fire-safety practices. Your local fire code and fire marshal have the final authority for open flames, holiday trees, occupancy, and emergency procedures.