

Housekeeping

Please see Appendix for Festive Decorations Policy Guidance

Introduction

Poor standards of housekeeping are a common cause of injury and damage at work and can create unnecessary fire hazards. Low standards often result from poor working practices and/or organisational deficiencies within the workplace.

Shropshire Council recognises the need to ensure that adequate standards of housekeeping are achieved, this arrangement is designed to ensure that service areas attain the highest possible standards in accordance with its commitment to provide a safe place of work.

There are three basic precautions to prevent poor housekeeping:

- ensuring that articles and substances are returned to designated locations after use.
- removing waste materials on a daily basis.
- reporting any problems which cannot be easily rectified.

Examples of poor working practices include:

- untidiness
- lack of thought and consideration by the individual
- ignoring rules and procedures

Poor housekeeping resulting from organisational arrangements includes:

- badly designed systems for work
- insufficient space for work activity
- inadequate storage facilities
- lack of training or information
- poor supervision
- infrequency or inefficiency of cleaning arrangements.

Organisational arrangements for housekeeping

Service areas will ensure that:-

- storage areas have been defined within the workplace. Requirements will be reviewed periodically and whenever refurbishment or relocation takes place. Articles and substances will be stored in defined storage areas at all times.
- floors are to be cleaned on a regular basis and waste bins emptied daily.

- Rubbish is to be kept in suitable containers and must not be allowed to overflow.
- Combustible waste must be kept away from ignition sources. Large items of rubbish that pose a particular hazard must be removed separately and without delay.
- Obsolete items of furniture or equipment must be removed without delay.

Under no circumstances will rubbish, waste or items of redundant furniture/equipment be placed in common parts i.e. corridors, landings, stairways, etc. this would present serious obstructions to evacuation in the event of fire and dense smoke emission.

- Workplace inspections will be carried out on a regular basis by designated personnel to identify areas where standards require improvement. These will be highlighted for remedial action.

Information and training

Where necessary suitable information and training will be provided to all employees in housekeeping arrangements within the workplace and in standards that must be achieved.

Responsibilities - managers and supervisors

Managers and supervisors must make sure that their areas of responsibility maintain satisfactory standards of housekeeping at all times by:

- ensuring that articles are not left in walkways or on the floor.
- ensuring that there are no trailing cables. Electrical cables should be kept clear from areas where they are likely to sustain damage, e.g. chairs, filing cabinet drawers, etc. Where cables cross the floor likely to be walked on, protective covers should be fitted to reduce the risk of tripping.
- ensuring that articles are stored in designated places.
- regularly checking that the working area to ensure that satisfactory standards of housekeeping are maintained.
- removing obsolete or unwanted articles or furniture by prior arrangement.

Responsibilities - employees

Employees are responsible for:

- ensuring that they do not allow waste materials to accumulate in their working area and for keeping their workstations tidy.

- acting in accordance with information and training relating to housekeeping in the workplace.
- reporting problems relating to storage or removal of articles to a responsible person.

Safe system of work

In order to ensure that satisfactory standards of housekeeping are achieved by:

- checking that the workplace is free from hazards at the beginning of each day.
- always putting articles away immediately after use.
- clearing up any spillages, etc. immediately.
- not allowing objects to protrude into walkways.
- ensuring that waste materials are properly stored and are removed on a regular basis.
- ensuring that special arrangements are made for the removal of unusual or extra-large objects or substances.
- not storing articles or substances anywhere other than in designated areas.
- ensuring the workplace is tidy and articles and substances have been put away at the end of the shift.

Record keeping

Records should be maintained as a matter of policy and to demonstrate that appropriate measures have been taken to ensure compliance with statutory duties.

Records may include:

- particulars about the washing, painting and varnishing of ceilings and walls, which should be recorded
- arrangements for emptying bins and cleaning floors
- cleaning schedules
- findings of safety inspections
- details of repairs and maintenance
- details of any relevant training.

Further information and references

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992

Appendix - Festive Decorations - Policy Guidance

Reviewed by the Health and Safety Team: October 2021

Shropshire Council – Festive Decorations - Policy Guidance

Safe use of festive decorations

This guidance note provides information on the restrictions and safe use of festive decorations and festive lights in Shropshire Council buildings.

The use of festive decorations presents a fire safety risk that will need to be managed at all locations.

Shropshire Council acknowledges this risk and aims to adopt a proactive approach to minimise the risk of fire caused by using festive decorations.

Building and Fire regulations provide strict controls on fire spread and combustibility on the surfaces of stairs and corridors, these requirements must not be ignored during the festive period and become more important in their implementation.

Where festive decorations are used the following criteria must be met:

Decorations

- Any decorations such as tinsel must be located away from heat and ignition sources such as light fittings, heaters and electrical equipment. They must also be clear from intruder and fire alarm sensors.
- Displays must not be located in escape routes including stairwells and lobbies, they must not impede the means of escape from the building.
- Combustible decorations must not be strung over corridors and in stairwell's.
- Staff must ensure that they take extra care when putting up decorations and must not stand on desk's, chair's or window sills.

Christmas Trees

- All artificial Christmas trees must be fire retardant and proof must be provided upon request.
- Ensure that Christmas trees are stable and cannot fall over.
- Do not impede the means of escape from the building.
- Fire action notices, fire alarm call points and fire extinguishers must not be obstructed and must remain clearly visible at all times.
- Power cables must not create a tripping hazard.

Christmas Tree (Fairy or decorative) Lights

Low voltage decorative fairy lights are the preferred option. Mains powered lights must be manufactured in accordance with BS EN 60598:2015 registered with the premises/building manager and PAT tested before use.

Check lights over before use:

- Never insert or remove bulbs when switched on.
- Inspect cables and bulbs for damage before use.

- Do not use lights which are damaged, dispose of them safely.
- Never fix lights in place with staples or nails.
- Decorative fairy lights must only be switched on during office hours and must be switched off when the office is unattended.
- Ensure that decorative fairy lights are switched off and unplugged at the end of the working day or when the office will be left unoccupied for long periods.
- Cables must not present a tripping hazard.
- Never attempt to join two sets of lights together or run them from the same plug.
- Only indoor lights must be used indoors.

Please note: Fairy lights went up in smoke causing 20 fires, while Christmas trees, decorations and cards were also a fire risk and responsible for 47 house fires in the UK, which led to 20 non-fatal casualties – source RoSPA.

Christmas Cards

- Keep Christmas cards away from heating appliances and heat sources, such as light fittings.

Candles

- Candles including birthday, aromatherapy or any other type of burners are not permitted in council buildings, due to the fire risk and risk of a fire alarm activation due to the smoke produced.
- Open flames must always be avoided.

Please note: Candles sparked around 1,000 UK house fires, resulting in 9 deaths and 388 casualties, in 2011/12 – source RoSPA.

Risk Assessment

All decorations and displays must be risk assessed and the risk assessment signed off by the line manager, or the person responsible for the area/team concerned.

Actions Required:

- Disseminate information to team managers as required.
- Remove any inappropriately positioned festive decorations and lights.
- Monitor compliance during routing safety inspections.
- Ensure mains powered lights are in a safe condition and PAT tested and within test date.