



Five Minutes to *Fire Safety*

Topic: Halloween and Seasonal Decorations

It's the time of the year for hayrack rides, changing leaves, and Halloween decorations. It's tempting to bring these outside events into our schools and classrooms, especially during our standard autumn celebrations. Here are some strategies to do so safely:

Use decorations that don't add a significant fuel load to your building. It may be especially tempting to bring dried corn plants or hay bales indoors, but this type of dried vegetation is very flammable. Fires need three things to start - oxygen, fuel, and heat. When combined with the oxygen levels in surrounding air, hay bales are nothing more than a fire in search of an ignition source. Use non-combustible decorations instead, and leave the highly flammable decorations outside and away from buildings.

Use flameless candles in jack-o-lanterns. Candles with an open flame caused more than 15,000 fires nationwide during 2006. By eliminating the open flame (while still getting illumination), you will greatly reduce the chance of a fire. Candles that utilize batteries can be purchased at a number of major retail outlets.

Put decorations in places that won't obstruct emergency lights, sprinkler systems, fire alarm systems, and exit signs. All of these items are vital to extinguishing a fire, notifying occupants of a fire, or making it possible for someone to exit safely. Make sure that decorations don't block any part of the fire alarm system, especially strobe lights, pull stations, and smoke detectors. Also make sure that the exit signs can be seen from every portion of the hallways they serve.

Above all, keep every required exit path clear and accessible. Being notified of an emergency and knowing you need to evacuate the building doesn't do anything if you can't actually get out of the building. Make sure that your exits are clear and unobstructed. Also make sure that any decorations on the doors don't disguise the fact that they are doors. Remember that the exit path extends from the door out to the sidewalk or public way, and keep this path free of obstructions and trip hazards as well.



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