

# SELF-INSURED SCHOOLS OF CALIFORNIA

## PROPERTY & LIABILITY UPDATE

OCTOBER 1, 2012

### HOLIDAY SAFETY

#### Use of Dry Ice

It's the time of year for fall carnivals, proms, and homecoming football games. The season brings with it the potential use of dry ice to enhance the atmosphere of these events. Therefore, this Update serves as a reminder of the hazards regarding dry ice and SISC's recommendation against its use.

Dry ice is listed as a hazardous material by the federal government. Students should not be using or handling dry ice under any circumstances. Hazards associated with the use of dry ice include:

Burns: Dry ice is a cryogenic material that can cause severe frostbite burns to skin.

Explosion: If stored in an air-tight container, pressure may build potentially causing an explosion.

Toxic: Although dry ice is not poisonous, it could be fatal, or at least cause severe damage to internal organs, even if a small piece is ingested.

Suffocation: If used in confined areas, the carbon dioxide emitted may displace oxygen causing an oxygen deficient environment.

Dry ice may also be used in science programs. School administration should inform staff that the use of dry ice by any student is prohibited.



SISC does not recommend the use of dry ice by a district under any circumstances. The hazards outweigh the benefits.

#### Christmas Trees at School Sites

The Christmas season will soon be here and SISC wants to make sure that school districts are aware of county and state guidelines with respect to the maintenance and decoration of Christmas trees so that children and staff can enjoy a safe, happy Christmas season.

To that end SISC has adopted the Kern County Fire Department guidelines for Christmas trees as the minimum standard for all SISC II member districts.

In addition to Christmas trees, teachers often decorate their rooms with festive themes for the holiday season. The abundance of paper decorations can present a serious fire hazard. The limitations on decorative materials should be reviewed at this time to help coordinate safety with holiday decorating.

If you have any questions, please contact your Safety and Loss Control Specialist at (661) 636-4604.

By: Safety and Loss Control



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SCHOOLS HELPING SCHOOLS

<b>Standard No. 1103.3-1</b>		
Kern County Fire Department Fire Prevention 	<b>Christmas Trees</b> (Previously Standard 11.2-1)	<hr/> Fire Marshal  Date: December 3, 1991 Revised: November 1, 2002

This Standard is promulgated in accordance with Section 1.104 of the Kern County Fire Code and is the official interpretation of Section 3.08 of Title 19 and Section 1103.3.3.1 of the Kern County Fire Code which states that Christmas trees must be flame retardant treated.

### **BACKGROUND**

Christmas trees become a serious fire hazard as they age and dry. Once ignited, Christmas trees burn violently. The tremendous heat generated by a burning Christmas tree can easily spread to the remainder of the building and/or block egress paths.

The potential hazard created by Christmas trees must be mitigated. Therefore, Christmas trees which are placed inside of any occupancy, except Group U Occupancies and dwellings and guest rooms of Group R Occupancies, shall be either live or flame retardant treated, or shall be maintained fire safe.

### **REQUIREMENTS**

#### **I. General Requirements**

1. Christmas trees shall not be placed in a location which would obstruct or hinder emergency egress.
2. Christmas trees shall not be placed within five (5) feet of any ignition source.
3. The tree shall be maintained in a fire safe condition
  - A. There are 3 methods of satisfying these requirements
    - (a). The tree can receive a fire retardant treatment in accordance with Section II.
    - (b). The tree can be a living Christmas tree and maintained in accordance with Section III.
    - (c). The tree can be maintained as a "fire safe Christmas tree" in accordance with Section IV.

#### **II. Fire Retardant Treatment**

1. The cut Christmas tree shall be made flame resistant by application of a flame retardant chemical approved by the California State Fire Marshal.

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2. The flame retardant chemical may be applied by the facility owner or his authorized representative, or by any applicator licensed by the California State Fire Marshal. If the flame retardant chemical is applied for a fee, the applicator shall be licensed by the California State Fire Marshal.
3. Lights and decorations may be placed on any Christmas tree which is made flame resistant.

### III. Living Christmas Trees

1. Living Christmas trees may be placed in any occupancy.
2. The Christmas tree shall be considered living if the roots are intact and covered with soil, and the tree is watered regularly.
3. Light and decorations may be placed on any living Christmas tree.

### IV. Fire Safe Christmas Trees

1. Christmas trees shall be considered fire safe if the following conditions are satisfied:
  - A. The Christmas tree must have a fresh cut made on the bottom of the trunk immediately before the tree is placed in the tree stand. The fresh cut shall be at least one inch above the original cut.
  - B. The tree shall be placed in a tree stand that is capable of holding water.
  - C. The Christmas tree must be watered regularly so that there is standing water in the tree stand at all times. The level of water must be at least two inches above the cut end of the trunk.
  - D. Lights shall not be used on a Fire Safe Christmas Tree.
  - E. Decorations may be placed on a Fire Safe Christmas Tree.
  - F. The Christmas tree must pass the flame test as follows:
    - (a). A four to six inch piece of the Christmas tree shall be removed from the end of one branch of the tree. This piece shall be held over a two inch flame for 10 seconds. The flame shall then be removed and if the branch does not continue to burn, it shall be considered fire safe.

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- (b). The Christmas tree shall be removed from the occupancy immediately if it fails to pass the flame test.
- G. The Christmas tree shall be removed from the occupancy before it becomes a fire hazard.

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## PROPERTY & LIABILITY

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