

Policy for Residence Hall Decorations

Purpose:

Virginia has recently adopted and implemented several changes in the Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code. This code is enforced by the State Fire Marshal's Office. The Office of Environmental Health and Safety is responsible for seeing that changes to the Fire Prevention Code are broadcast to the University, and that Longwood University is in compliance with all regulations. These changes affect all Virginia State colleges and universities.

Resident rooms, suites, doors and hallways:

1. Combustible materials may not be placed on the surface of doors facing hallways, stairwells or other exits (resident room doors, bathroom doors, stairwell doors, exterior doors, etc.). Examples of combustible materials include but are not limited to paper of any kind, contact paper, and plastics.
2. Residents are permitted to post one small dry erase message board (8.5"x11") on the exterior of the room door.
3. Resident names may be posted on the room door, using only one half of a sheet of paper (8.5"x11") per room occupant. Room numbers should not be covered.
4. No other posting of combustible materials by residents on the hallway walls, exit doors, or in stairwells is permitted. Posting of flyers and other combustible materials is permitted only on general purpose bulletin boards, hall council and staff bulletin boards and authorized posting areas for residence hall staff. All posted materials must be flush with the mounting surface.
5. In student rooms, no materials of any kind may be hung from ceilings. No more than 10% of the total wall surfaces in a room may be covered with combustible decorative materials, including framed items (also refer to #6).
6. Improper decorative hangings contribute to the rapid spread of fire. Curtains, draperies, wall hangings, blankets, flags, banners, and other decorative materials suspended from walls, closets, or other vertical surfaces must be flame resistant or noncombustible. Virginia statewide fire code does not permit any other combustible materials, such as posters, paper or cardboard to be on or hung around windows. Curtains or drapes that are purchased or made of flame resistant materials must have a manufacturer's tag verifying such. Fabrics may be treated with a chemical to render them flame resistant, and a 2"x2" sample of the treated material must be furnished for a flammability test when requested by a representative of the university or State Fire Marshal's Office.
7. Only "cool" mini-lights (holiday style lights) are authorized for use in student rooms and must be strung together according to manufacturer's recommendation (usually 2-3 strings). Care shall be taken to ensure that lights do not come in contact with combustible material and the first or "lead" string must be plugged directly into the wall or university approved power strip with over current/breaker protection. The lights may be on only when the room is occupied.
8. Flammable items such as fuel (propane, lamp oil, solvents, gasoline, etc) may not be stored or used in any area of the residence hall.
9. Posters, pictures and other decorations must not be placed around sprinkler heads or smoke detectors.

10. Room decorations are subject to inspection by university and/or state officials to ensure compliance with these guidelines. Failure to follow the guidelines may result in the removal of decorations.

Public areas (lounges, lobbies, or other common area rooms within residence halls):

1. Exit doors, hallways, stairwells, and other means of egress (exit) may not be obstructed in any way.
2. Combustible materials such as cotton batting, straw, dry vines, leaves, trees (cut or live), artificial flowers, shrubbery, and foam-type plastic materials shall not be used for decorative purposes in such a quantity as to constitute a fire hazard, unless such material is flame resistant in an approved and verified manner. This applies to cuttings from evergreens, as well. Refer to #8 above for additional limitations.
3. Decorations shall not be affixed to or cover exit signs, doors, doorways, smoke detectors, fire alarm pull stations, or any audio/visual alarms.
4. Decorations may not be placed on, over, or in close proximity to light fixtures, other electrical devices, or appliances.
5. Only artificial trees are permitted in the rooms and public areas where the tree is placed so as not to block an exit or access to an exit.
6. Only "cool" mini-lights (holiday style lights) are authorized for use in public areas and must be strung together according to manufacturer's recommendation (usually 2-3 strings). Care shall be taken to ensure that lights do not come in contact with combustible material and the first or "lead" string must be plugged directly into the wall or university approved power strip with over-current/breaker protection. Lights may be on only when the room or public area is occupied.
7. All electrical decorations shall bear the UL label and shall only be used as rated for either indoor or outdoor applications. All light strings and cords shall be checked for fraying, bare wires, loose connections, and cracked or damaged plugs. Cords may not be passed through doors, window openings, above ceiling tiles or through holes in the wall. Never string lights or decorate with any type of electrical decorations or devices on metallic trees.
8. Public area decorations are subject to inspection by university and/or state officials to ensure compliance with these guidelines. Failure to follow the guidelines may result in the removal of decorations.
9. Public area decorations may only be displayed for the time interval noted below. All decorations must be disposed of, or stored, properly.
 - o **Halloween:** October 24th - November 1st.
 - o **Thanksgiving:** November 8th - November 23rd
 - o **December Holidays:** November 29th - December 17th

Other Holidays or Events: Special decoration requests should be submitted to the Residence Education Coordinator. Approved public posting requests will not exceed 72 hours.