

S₂ Partnership Ltd
Intelligent Risk Management

HEALTH & SAFETY BRIEFING NOTE

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE WINTER

Considerations for the winter



The S₂ Partnership offers practical advice for managing seasonal changes. Cold weather brings hazards that can be mitigated with effective controls. Include measures for managing seasonal and climatic conditions in your risk assessments to reduce risks to a reasonable level.

Commercial Waste Containers: An increased number of deaths have occurred due to people sleeping in waste containers during cold conditions. Such persons can be killed by being accidentally crushed by waste collection. This risk can be reduced by storing containers in a secure location, locking them, and checking for signs of activity.

Low Light: Even in the daytime, low lighting conditions can present an increased safety and security risk. Confirm that lighting is functional and sufficient for those on-site. Decide if higher-risk activities can be done during the best light hours.

Contractor Management: This is important at all times of the year, but during winter, extra care and attention should be taken if contractors are carrying out work externally. Risk assessments and method statements provided by contractors must be reviewed to ensure they encompass seasonal risks.

Heating: As winter approaches, it's time to switch on heating systems. However, if you have air circulation or radiator systems that haven't been used in a while, there may be a problem with dust generation and false smoke alarms. To prevent any issues, follow these steps:

- Service your heating systems before starting them up after a period of inactivity.
 - Make sure your filters are clean and establish a cleaning routine before starting the heating systems.
 - Prioritise the servicing of your fire alarm system this quarter. If it's an addressable system, address any sensitivity issues with smoke detection.
- Snow & Ice:** Assess the risk. Areas of high pedestrian traffic are particularly prone to the effects of snow and ice. These areas include:
- Building entrances
 - Car parks
 - Pedestrian walkways
 - Sloped areas
 - Areas within shade.
 - Effective Salt and gritting in these areas can significantly reduce the risk of trips or slips, by actively reducing surface ice. Be mindful of falling objects such as icicles and heavy snowfall hanging over pavements. Steps should be taken to remove these where possible.

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Slippery Surfaces: The most effective control you can implement here is preventing slippery surfaces. The accumulation of leaves, moss and other vegetation on pathways can increase the risk of slips. Regular inspection and clearance can reduce the build-up and accumulation of these.

Inside buildings, a simple slip test can help review the slip resistance of flooring and ascertain what additional measures should be taken to prevent slip accidents. Where this is not possible, you should warn pedestrians and drivers of any such hazards. Redirect them to less slippery walkways and separate off existing ones using signage and/or barriers.

Winter Cooling Tower Shutdown: The demand for cooling in many buildings is highly reduced during winter. Cooling towers can remain idle, increasing the risk of stagnation and microbiological growth. Shutting down cooling towers during the winter months will save significant water, energy, and chemical costs. Following a suitable water treatment program and operating procedures will ensure that your cooling tower is shut down correctly. This will help prevent the formation of iron chips and biofilm, protecting it over the winter and facilitating a trouble-free start-up ready for spring.

Contact us for a sample water treatment program shutdown procedure. All cooling towers differ, so it is advisable to seek professional help before undertaking any work relating to cooling tower systems.

Roof Safety: Windspeeds are likely to increase, which will be a factor associated with any external work. Carry out an assessment before work starts and remember to include:

- Loose debris on roof/facades
- Condition of structures on roofs (such as tank rooms), as well as cladding systems
- Trees and signage
- Guttering

Working on roof areas is a high-risk activity, especially during the winter months. Therefore, a roof safety inspection must first be carried out to assess the associated hazards and risks. All activities should be carried out under a permit to work where there is no edge protection and assessment of these areas must include any fragile surfaces. Further guidance on roof work can be found in several HSE documents including:

- INDG284 - Working on Roofs
- HSG33 - Health and Safety in Roof Work
- WAHR2005 - Work at Height Regulations

Freezing Water: Cold weather can cause water in pipes and drains to freeze, causing blockages. Take preventative action. Areas particularly susceptible could be:

- Vacant units where background heating is not maintained.
- External/exposed water pipes.

Water systems should be drained down to prevent freezing and bursting. Water pipes exposed to external temperatures should be adequately lagged or fitted with trace heating.





With December's arrival, the festive season kicks off, prompting people to decorate their workplaces with Christmas decorations. However, it's crucial to prioritise fire safety while decorating. The abundance of ornaments, lights, and Christmas trees increases the risk of fire hazards.

A real Christmas tree that is dry can quickly catch fire and cause extensive damage to furniture, walls, and carpets. To prevent this, ensure that you water the tree daily. This slows down the spread of flames, providing more time to extinguish the fire or evacuate the building.

Guidelines for putting up the Christmas tree:

- Secure the tree's base and ensure the holder is in good condition and appropriate for the tree's size
- Choose a safe location away from high-traffic areas where it is likely to be knocked over or lights/decorations may become damaged.
- Avoid placing candles, naked flames, or electrical outlets near the tree, as this poses a fire hazard. It is advisable to refrain from using naked flames in the workplace for safety reasons.
- Ensure the tree does not compromise any escape routes from the building.
- Christmas tree lights must have been subject to portable appliance testing within the last 12 months or be brand new.

Guidelines for putting up Christmas decorations in the workplace:

- Provide staff with a suitable step ladder (Class 1 or EN131) that has been inspected or is new
- Do not allow the use of office chairs or desks as the use of these poses an increased risk of falls and injury.
- Anyone using the steps must be competent and aware of the safe use of steps additional information can be found at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/work-at-height/ladders/when-how-to-use-ladders-safely.htm>
- Have another member of the team hold the steps to ensure the stepladder is stable
- Avoid overreaching and wear appropriate footwear
- Do not stand on the top step and maintain three points of contact

Avoid decorating workspaces with fairy lights, tinsel, or suspended decorations around desks, overhanging lights or lamps. Christmas decorations are highly flammable and can easily catch fire due to the heat generated by the lights. It is best to refrain from decorating these areas.

Considerations for the winter

For commercial properties with professional decoration installation:

- Ensure Work at Height is controlled, including under a permit to work if necessary
- Contractors must provide site-specific risk assessments that cover the works being undertaken
- Install decorations outside of working hours and restrict access to the public where appropriate
- Ensure contractors are competent and certified for the use of access equipment (i.e. mobile elevating work platforms or harnesses/eyebolts)
- Ensure anchor points have been Inspected within the last 12 months in accordance with LOLER 1998 regulations and BS 8539 / BS 7883

Christmas Parties: To ensure workplace safety during Christmas parties, please download the comprehensive guide from the government website:

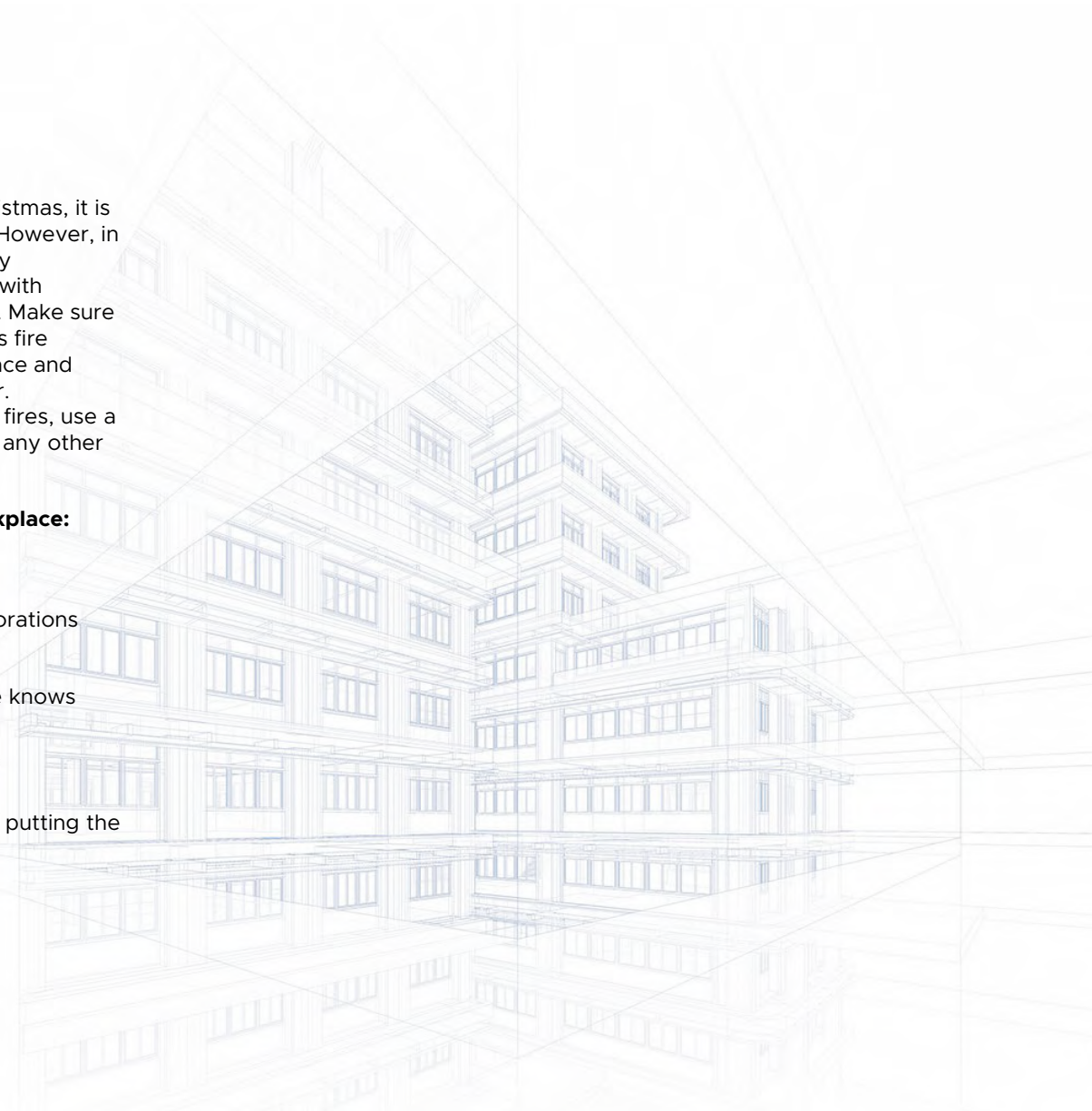
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/event-safety/>

Remember that parties differ from regular work environments in terms of fire safety. Factors such as alcohol consumption, increased occupancy, higher fire loading, and unfamiliarity with the building layout and alarm systems should be considered. Therefore, it is recommended to conduct a separate fire risk assessment specifically for party events.

To make the workplace fire safe this Christmas, it is important to take preventive measures. However, in case of a fire, it is crucial to have properly functioning fire safety equipment, along with corresponding signage, readily available. Make sure that all the necessary equipment, such as fire extinguishers and fire blankets, are in place and regularly serviced by a certified engineer. Additionally, for potential Christmas tree fires, use a Class C fire extinguisher and avoid using any other type of extinguisher for electrical fires.

Additional Fire Safety Tips for the Workplace:

- Regularly test fire alarms
- Switch off all lights and electrical decorations before leaving
- Conduct fire drills to ensure everyone knows what to do in case of a fire
- Keep walkways and corridors clear
- Perform a fire risk assessment before putting the Christmas decorations up



How can S₂ help?



S₂ Partnership is a leading safety risk management specialist for the commercial property sector. Our knowledgeable, independent consultancy services and RiskWise property risk management software are trusted by many of the leading managing agents, property owners, investors and insurers within the industry.

S₂ Partnership provides highly effective safety management systems, risk assessments, auditing, training, strategy development and competent support covering a range of expertise: health & safety, fire safety, asbestos, water hygiene, environmental management, occupational safety and crisis management. All our consultants are experienced professionals and carry chartered accreditations from their associated professional bodies. We keep updated with best practices and legal regulations to innovate our consultancy service offerings to meet our client's needs. Our consultancy services are complemented by S₂ RiskWise property risk management software.

We hope you find the information contained in this document helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require any further guidance or support.

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