

Candles

The use of candles to create a special atmosphere is now very common. However, it is important to remember that they can be the cause of major fires and serious injuries if not used correctly. Simple precautions should mean that candles can be used safely.

Choice of candle

Good quality slow-burning candles are best. Cheaper, catering-quality candles will burn down quickly, and the flame may soon get dangerously close to foliage or decorations.

Hand-held candles

Great care needs to be taken where people are given candles to hold, especially where large numbers are involved. Apart from the risk of igniting flammable materials, molten wax can cause damage to clothing and is very hot. Purpose-made candles are available, and should be used with proper slide-on card drip trays. Where children are involved, even greater care is necessary. Children should be properly supervised and care taken to ensure that they do not stand too close together and in particular not too close behind one another as there is a risk of both clothing and hair being set alight.

Placing of candles

Candles must be kept clear of all combustible materials including flammable decorations, foliage and electrical equipment. Ideally, candles should be placed in metal holders on noncombustible surfaces such as stone or brick.

Fire extinguishers

Fire extinguishers must always be readily available where candles are being used. Water extinguishers are the most suitable for dealing with burning foliage, paper and wood. Staff must know where the extinguishers are and how to use them. Training can be provided either by your fire extinguisher supplier or the local fire brigade. Water must not be used on electrical equipment.

Fire blanket

A fire blanket may be a better way of dealing with certain fire situations, and you should have at least one available. They are particularly suitable for dealing with burning clothing.

Means of escape

If a fire should start, you must be certain that people can get out of the building quickly. All doors must be unlocked and be capable of being opened quickly. Regular fire drills should take place with identified Fire Marshalls. Fire escape routes should be made clear to all staff and visitors and prior to the start of a special event.