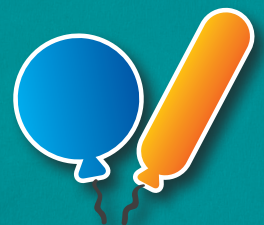




THE  
**ULTIMATE  
GUIDE**  
TO THE  
**BEST  
HOLIDAY**  
*EVER\**

*\*During the COVID-19 pandemic*

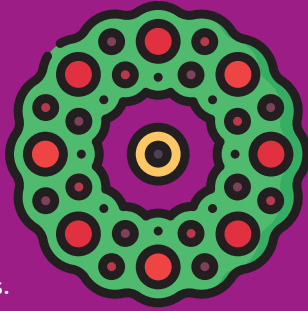
'Tis the season for decorations, parties, packages, and more. Happy homeowners and new traditions begin here.



# Rules

## Holiday Displays

Community associations may choose to develop a holiday and religious display rule that is easy for residents to follow and simple to enforce. Have a happy holiday with these tips.



## Board Members

- Ask residents whether they believe your community association would benefit from a rule for holiday and religious displays.
- Consult with your community association manager and attorney if your community decides it would benefit from a rule.
- Make sure your policy is consistent with your association's governing documents as well as state and local laws.
- Create a holiday and religious display rule only if necessary.
- Include community consensus in the rule. It may contain the start and end dates of when decorations may be displayed, hours when lights and displays in yards or balconies may be on, and specifics regarding size, sounds, and placement.
- Ensure that the policy is clear, enforceable, and reasonable.
- Request feedback from residents throughout the process.
- Communicate new information to all residents after the policy is adopted.
- Remind residents of the rule prior to each holiday season.
- Review your policy regularly and determine if it needs to be updated.

## Residents

- Read updates from the community association, attend meetings, and contribute to the conversation.
- Know your community association's rule before putting up your holiday decorations and religious displays.
- Ask your board for clarification if you have a question about the rule.
- Volunteer on the board or on committees to influence the community's approach.
- Enjoy your neighbors and your community during the holidays and throughout the year.



# Happy Policy Days

If you need help crafting a holiday decorating resolution or updating a current one, consider some of the following elements:

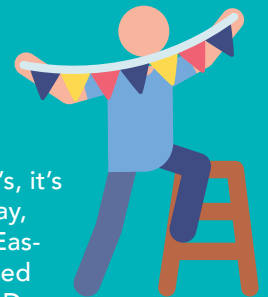
**TIMING.** Holiday decorations may be displayed no more than X days before and X days after the actual holiday.

**COMMON AREAS.** A committee will survey residents and determine what holidays will be represented on common areas. Decorations, such as small white lights on trees and menorahs, will be installed by the association. Santa figures, sleighs, reindeer, and Nativity scenes are prohibited on common elements.

**INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES.** Homeowners may install decorations on their properties. Holiday lighting may only be used from sunset to 10 p.m. and must not interfere with a neighbor's use of his or her property. The decorations must not be offensive or obscene.

**ENFORCEMENT.** Items that do not conform to these guidelines will be removed by the association.

# The Spirit Lives On



Once we get past New Year's, it's a short hop to Valentine's Day, then St. Patrick's Day, then Easter, and then the star-spangled trifecta: Memorial Day, Flag Day, and Independence Day. And then it's Halloween again. People have been known to decorate for any and all of these off-peak holidays with flags, window decals, and other accoutrements. The same guidelines apply. Adjust your policy to allow pumpkins and goblins to be displayed throughout the month of October, hearts and cupids to abound in February, and so on—within the limits of safety and common sense, of course.

As for your common areas, again, see what your residents think. If they like leprechauns in March and pilgrims and turkeys in November, go for it. But you might want to appoint a decorating committee to handle the workload.

## Events & Activities



### Celebrate the Season

Put policy development, implementation, and enforcement aside for a minute and remember what's really important: celebrating the holiday season. This can be a great opportunity for your residents to get to know one another and become involved in association operations.

- Organize a party to decorate common areas and common elements.
- Hold a contest for decorated homes—within the guidelines of your official policy, of course—and compete for a prize.

You never know what will increase resident participation, boost community spirit, and even get people to run for board positions. Parties and contests (and your policy itself) also are great ways to show that your association isn't trying to squash your residents' individual rights.

## Making a List

Once the board has approved a holiday policy, make sure your residents are informed of the new rules.



- Post the policy on your community's website and send an email to residents.
- Pass out copies of the policy door-to-door.
- Publish the policy in your community's newsletter.
- Include details about the policy in your association's welcome packets, settlement sheet, and disclosure packets.

Keep in mind that holiday decorating is seasonal; if you approve your policy during the spring or summer, send residents a friendly reminder in the fall. It's also good to print the information in your newsletter at least once every year so that no one is caught off guard.

## Making Memories

### 15 ways to create new traditions in your community:

- Bring together volunteers who like collaborating with each other.
- Create a social committee that can brainstorm ideas for events.
- Make the mission about making people happy, not putting organizers in the limelight.
- Tap local resources and experts.
- Involve older children as volunteers so they can learn about giving back to the community.
- Learn from your mistakes each year, and adjust next year's program.
- Ask vendors and local businesses for donations of goods or money for the event.
- Task your community clubs for support.
- Save money. Reuse decorations, lights, and volunteer T-shirts each year.
- Prioritize the parts of the holiday celebration that are most important to residents and skip the rest when budget is tight.
- Start small and let the event grow over the years.
- Get in the spirit of the season. Ask residents to bring food or gifts for the needy as their price of admission.
- Spark some competition with decorating contests.
- Plan events that encourage as many participants as possible.
- Plan more festivities during the year if a winter holiday celebration succeeds.



» Look for ideas for holiday events and activities at [www.caionline.org/BestHolidayGuide](http://www.caionline.org/BestHolidayGuide).



# Packages

If residents in your community association have been frequent targets of package theft, share these tips to deter thieves and ensure packages are kept safe:

**SCHEDULE DELIVERIES.** When purchasing expensive items such as electronics, arrange for deliveries to be made when you are home.

**NOTIFY A HOUSEHOLD MEMBER OR A NEIGHBOR WHEN YOU ARE EXPECTING A PACKAGE.** If you can't be home when a package is delivered, have a household member or a trusted neighbor be on the lookout. You also may want to give them permission to pick up your package and hold it until you arrive.

**INSTALL DOORBELL CAMERAS OR OTHER SECURITY SYSTEMS.**

Recording devices can provide evidence of package theft to bring to your association's board and notify police. Check your association's rules and regulations on these devices before installing them.

**OPT FOR PACKAGE PICKUP.** Many delivery companies have lockers and pickup points in numerous retail locations that have extended hours, allowing you to collect your package at your convenience.

Preventing package theft is a community effort. Encourage your neighbors to be on alert and report any incidents to the association board and police.



# Overnight Guests

It wouldn't be the holidays without some close friends or relatives making an extended stay. Depending on how long guests are staying, the association may need to be informed.

The governing documents typically have rules for both short-term and long-term guests.



# NOISE

Noise is inevitable with visitors in town, especially for residents in a condominium. It can become a nuisance if it stretches into midnight, or if it makes the walls and floors in neighbors' homes reverberate continuously.

If you're hosting a holiday party, give neighbors a heads up of how many guests you expect and how long you anticipate the celebration to last. Be considerate of the amount of noise being generated by music, television, or pets. The association's governing documents can provide guidelines for hosting parties and when quiet hours begin and end.



# PARKING

The holidays bring many people together, and that means extra cars will need to be parked. Associations usually have broad authority to make rules and regulations related to temporary, short-term parking. The board can prohibit parking on lawns, in front of a fire hydrant, or anywhere that blocks a sidewalk, an emergency vehicle's access, or another driver's view.

Residents hosting guests should check the rules on visitor parking, including where they can park (such as an overflow lot, if the association has one) and what kind of parking passes they may need.



Information from this guide was compiled from numerous articles in *Common Ground™* magazine archives.

» Search "holiday" in CAI's online Research Library. [www.caionline.org/ResearchLibrary](http://www.caionline.org/ResearchLibrary).

» Download this guide and access more holiday resources at [www.caionline.org/BestHolidayGuide](http://www.caionline.org/BestHolidayGuide).

