

## Preparing Your Business for the Holiday Season

The holiday season is a hectic time for consumers and businesses alike. During this busy time, companies experience an uptick in foot traffic and sales, necessitating more product and staff.

While this often means higher profits for retail businesses, seasonal employees, crowded stores and a greater amount of inventory can be a recipe for disaster. In fact, during this time, stores face a variety of risks related to theft, workplace safety, employee morale and property damage. This Risk Insights highlights some tips businesses need to know to prepare for this year's holiday season.

### Mitigate Your Risks

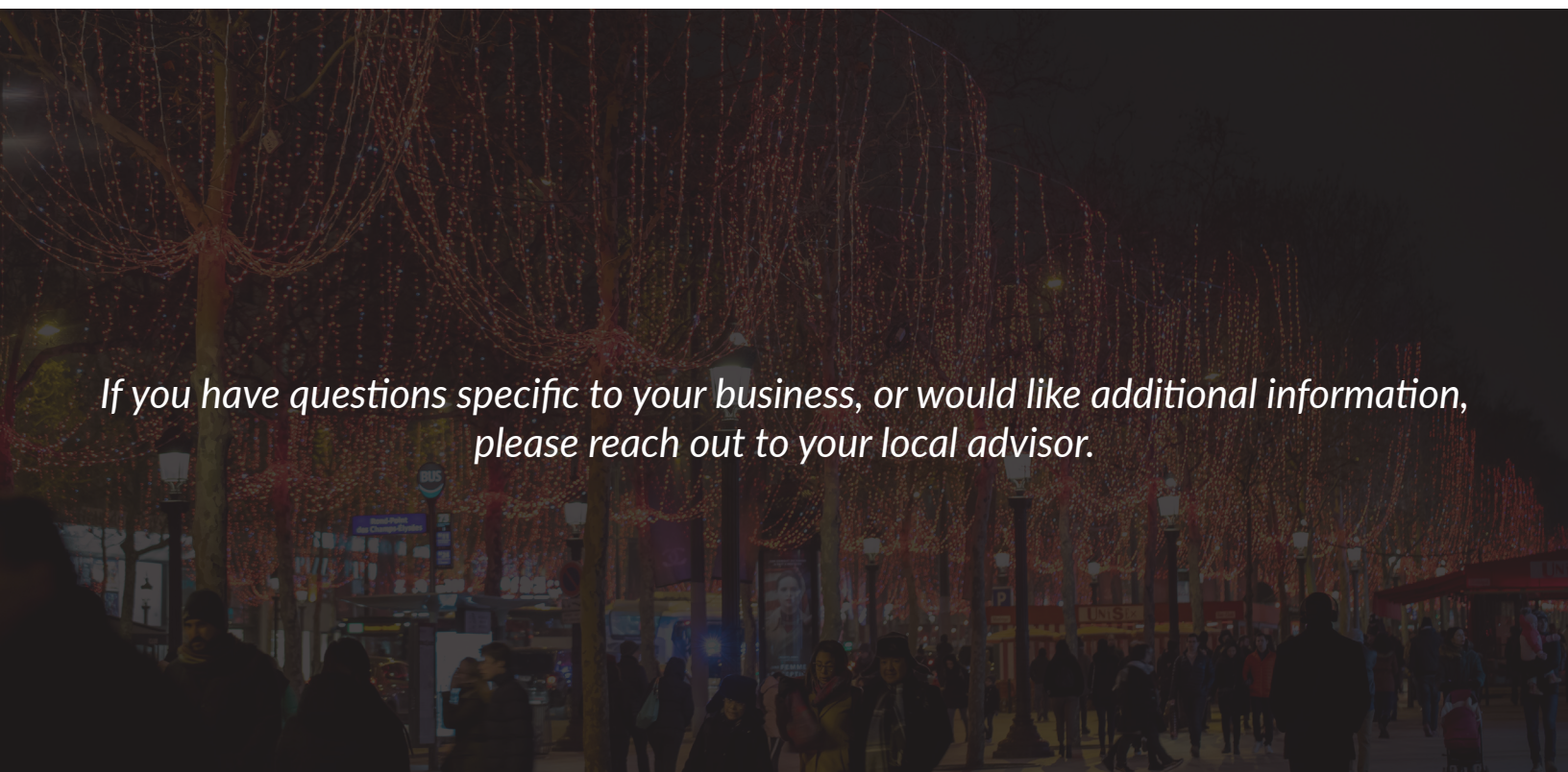
Depending on your type of business and how you approach seasonal hiring, there are a variety of exposures to account for. The following are some general tips that can help you maintain a safe and productive business this holiday season:

- **Maintain good housekeeping practices**—Slips, trips and falls are common hazards businesses face every month of the year. However, these risks are magnified when you consider things like increased foot traffic and inventory. To keep workers and patrons safe, consider doing the following:
  - Keep floors clean, dry and in good condition.
  - Ensure aisles, exits and entrances remain clear of product and other hazards.
  - Complete a general check of the sales floor on a regular basis, looking for potential hazards.
  - Keep entrances, exits and walkways free of ice and snow.
  - Address spills in a timely fashion.
- **Store product in a careful and organized fashion**—Injuries caused by falling inventory or crowded stockrooms are often overlooked. Improperly stored, heavy products that hit customers or employees can create serious liability concerns and lead to major injuries. To protect your store, do the following:
  - Maintain appropriate inventory levels. Avoid overcrowding backrooms and other storage areas.
  - Store heavy items closer to the ground.
  - Encourage employees to use a ladder to reach items on high shelves.
- **Account for employee-related risks**—The holidays are a busy time, and hiring seasonal employees can help ease the burden. However, if you don't properly train these individuals, it could lead to serious on-the-job accidents. What's more, with expensive products lining your shelves, both full-time and temporary staff could be tempted to steal. To account for these and similar employee-related risks, consider the following:
  - Ensure any new hires are familiar with their surroundings and responsibilities.
  - Review daily transactions and security footage to help mitigate the risk of theft. This practice can reduce customer theft as well.
  - Vet seasonal employees and begin the hiring process before the holidays begin. Conduct background checks and give yourself enough time to onboard seasonal hires effectively.
  - Pair new workers with experienced employees as often as possible.
  - Train employees on safety concerns and provide them with the right tools for the job. Rotate jobs and ensure workers take frequent breaks.
  - Have policies and procedures in place that account for safety concerns, like workplace harassment and violence.

- **Manage customer-related risks**—The holiday season can stress customers, and it's important to ensure your business is safe for all shoppers. To maintain order in your store, consider the following:
  - Retrain all employees about your store's emergency protocols.
  - Use experienced and knowledgeable employees to help manage crowds and resolve potential conflicts.
  - Place sale items throughout the store strategically. This can help disperse crowds and manage traffic flow.
  - Hire on-site security staff. Request the assistance of local law enforcement if you need additional help managing large crowds.
  - Educate employees on who to contact in the event of an emergency.
- **Chose your decorations carefully**—During the holidays, it's not uncommon for businesses to go all-out with displays and decorations. While this can brighten up a sales floor, misplaced decorations and poor safety procedures can create fire and other hazards. To address this, do the following:
  - Avoid using combustible decorations.
  - Store decorations away from sources of heat or ignition.
  - Use extension cords properly and don't overload them.
  - Choose smart locations for any additional holiday displays. Do not block emergency exit signs or doorways.
  - Secure decorations properly. Ensure they will not tip over and that customers can easily navigate around them.

### Secure the Right Policy and Rest Assured this Holiday Season

The holidays can be a challenge for businesses, particularly from a risk management standpoint. In addition to proactively managing your exposures, securing the proper insurance can go a long way toward keeping your employees and customers safe.



*If you have questions specific to your business, or would like additional information, please reach out to your local advisor.*

**LET US HELP YOU MANAGE YOUR RISK**

#### LOCATIONS

Edmonton: 1.800.665.5243

Calgary: 1.866.845.8330

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