

Fire hazard: Cheap plastic living walls could cost you your business and more

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Businesses are being warned against using cheap, plastic living walls that could invalidate their building insurance and pose a fire risk.

phs Greenleaf says that it is seeing an increasing number of businesses buying low-cost replica living walls online as a way to add more aesthetic appeal to their buildings. However, many of these plastic walls do not meet health and safety standards and can put lives in danger.

Stephen Dieppe is the Managing Director of phs Greenleaf, which has been providing interior and exterior planting and grounds services to commercial businesses for over 20 years.

"It's a worrying trend," he says. "There are lots of these cheap replica walls available on different low-cost websites, often being delivered from overseas. You do not know the type of plastic that's been used, what materials the foliage are made from or how it has been manufactured and, unfortunately, it may end up costing businesses a lot in the long run. We are hearing almost monthly reports now of cheap living walls going up in flames.

"Unless you can guarantee that your living wall is flame retardant, your insurance will not cover it either, and you are putting the people using your building at risk as well as breaching your health and safety obligations."

Replica living walls are often used as an alternative to real living walls in interior spaces where low light or the environment may not allow real plants to thrive. Research has shown that both real and replica living walls bring huge benefits to those who use the space around them, including improvements in general well-being and mood and greater productivity.

“Good quality replica living walls, like the ones supplied by phs Greenleaf, are life-like, long-lasting and – crucially – flame retardant,” says Stephen Dieppe.

“We don’t use flammable silk flowers or foliage, as many cheap replicas will. These, quite literally, add fuel to fire and are dangerous to use. We have seen cases where sources like candles, cigarettes and sparklers have caused cheap living walls to combust in seconds. All of the materials we use are flame retardant, meaning they will not catch alight and can help to slow the spread of any fire.

“Living walls are a fantastic addition to any workplace, shop, hotel or restaurant, but they are an investment and cutting corners will only cost more in the long run. You should always talk to an expert like phs Greenleaf. We have an experienced team who can work within your budget to create something that is both visually stunning and safe.”

[phs Greenleaf](#) provides planting services including indoor and outdoor plants, artificial and live planting, living walls, grounds maintenance and Christmas trees and decorations.

Part of the phs Group, phs Greenleaf supplies over 8,000 customers in a range of sectors with high quality horticultural services. phs Greenleaf holds a Royal Warrant – the mark of recognition for those who have supplied goods and services to the royal household for at least five years. Since 2010, phs Greenleaf has held a Royal Warrant for the installation and maintenance of plant displays in Buckingham Palace.

As well as supplying and installing everything from potted plants to live trees, phs Greenleaf’s experienced and knowledgeable team also conduct regular maintenance visits on site to tend to the plants installed.