

# BUILDING AND FIRE SAFETY IN SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL FACILITIES



## SELECTED OHIO LAWS AND CODES AFFECTING BUILDINGS AND FIRE SAFETY IN SCHOOLS

This information has been selected to assist schools and district facilities with avoiding or correcting common code violations. This document is a tool to increase compliance and safety of students, staff, faculty and visitors to their respective buildings/facilities.

\*All code references are from the 2017 edition of the Ohio Fire Code.

## **Safety Tips for a Safer Classroom**

- Use only approved circuit breaker protected outlet strips.
- Keep storage orderly and below the required distance below the ceiling.
- Use only flame-retardant decorations and keep displays on walls at a minimum.
- Keep exits and exit paths clear of obstructions.
- Know your primary and secondary exit points.
- Practice your school's emergency evacuation plans regularly.
- Know the location of your classroom's closest fire extinguisher and how to properly use it.
- Space heater use is not permitted.
- Ensure that ALL fires or attempted fires are reported to the Fire Department for follow-up. *Curiosity* fire behavior can lead to more hazardous fire behavior including aggravated arson. Contact Washington C.H. Fire Department for any assistance. (740)-636-2362

## ***SECTION 315 General Storage***

**315.3 Storage in buildings.** Storage of materials in buildings shall be orderly and stacks shall be stable. Storage of combustible materials shall be separated from heaters or heating devices.

**315.3.1 Clearance to Storage.** Storage shall be maintained 2 feet or more below the ceiling in non-sprinkler areas of buildings or a minimum of 18 inches below sprinkler head deflectors in sprinkled areas of buildings.

**315.3.2 Means of Egress.** Combustible material shall not be stored in exits or enclosures for stairways and ramps.

**315.3.3 Equipment rooms.** Combustible material shall not be stored in boiler rooms, mechanical rooms or electrical rooms.



## ***SECTION 807 Decorative Material other than Decorative Vegetation in New and Existing Buildings***

**807.1 GENERAL:** Combustible decorative materials, other than decorative vegetation, shall comply with paragraphs (807.2) to (807.5.6).

**807.2 Limitations.** The following requirements shall apply to all occupancies:

- (a) Furnishings or decorative materials of an explosive or highly flammable character shall not be used.
- (b) Fire-retardant coatings in existing buildings shall be maintained so as to retain the effectiveness of the treatment under service conditions encountered in actual use.
- (c) Furnishings or other objects shall not be placed to obstruct exits, access thereto, egress therefrom or visibility thereof.
- (d) The permissible amount of noncombustible decorative materials shall not be limited.

**807.3 Combustible decorative materials.** Curtains, draperies, fabric hangings and other similar combustible decorative materials suspended from walls or ceilings shall comply with paragraph (807.4) of this rule and shall not exceed 10% (ten percent) of the specific wall or ceiling to which they are attached.

Fixed or movable walls and partitions, paneling, wall pads and crash pads, applied structurally or for decoration, acoustical correction, surface insulation or other purposes, shall be considered interior finish and will not be considered decorative materials or furnishings.

**807.4 Acceptance criteria and reports.** Curtains, draperies, fabrics and other similar combustible decorative materials suspended from walls or ceilings shall be tested by an approved agency. Reports of test results shall be prepared in accordance with the test method used and furnished to the fire code official.

*Explanation: Decorations cannot be suspended from walls or ceilings unless they are rated as “flame retardant”. The items must have the original manufacturer tags in place, legible, and accessible. Flammable decorations contribute to the spread of toxic & deadly gases and have been cited as a contributing factor in major loss of life fires including Our Lady of Angels School Fire & The Station Night Club.*



Acceptable classroom decorations



Classroom decoration fire code violation



Example of flame-retardant tag for decorative materials

**807.5.1.1 Foamed plastics:** Exposed foam plastic material and unprotected materials containing foam plastic used for decorative purposes or stage scenery or exhibit booths shall have a maximum heat release rate of 100kW when tested in accordance with UL 1975

**807.5.1.2 Motion Picture Screens.** Projector screens in new and existing buildings shall meet the flame propagation performance criteria of NFPA 701.

**807.5.2.1 Storage in corridors and lobbies.** Clothing and personal effects shall not be stored in corridors and lobbies.

**Exceptions:**

1. Corridors protected by an approved automatic sprinkler system installed in accordance with *paragraph (c) (3) (a) (I) (903.3.1.1) of rule 1301:7-7-09 of the Administrative Code.*
2. Corridors protected by an approved fire alarm system installed in accordance with *paragraph (G) (907) of rule 1301:7-7-09 of the Administrative Code.*
3. Storage in metal lockers provided the minimum required egress width is maintained.

**807.5.2.2 Artwork in corridors.** Artwork and teaching materials shall be limited on the walls of corridors to not more than 20% (twenty per cent) of the wall area.

**807.5.2.3 Artwork in classrooms.** Artwork and teaching materials shall be limited on walls of classrooms to not more than 50% (fifty per cent) of the specific wall area to which they are attached.

## ***SECTION 1003 General Means of Egress***

**1003.3.4 Clear width.** Protruding objects shall not reduce the minimum clear width of accessible routes.

**1003.6 Means of Egress Continuity.** The path of egress travel along a means of egress shall not be interrupted by a building element other than a means of egress component as specified in this rule. Obstructions shall not be placed in the minimum width or required capacity of a means of egress component except projections permitted by this rule. The minimum width or required capacity of a means of egress system shall not be diminished along the path of egress travel.

## ***SECTION 1031 Maintenance of the Means of Egress***

**1031.2 Reliability.** Required exit accesses, exits or exit discharges shall be continuously maintained free from obstructions or impediments to full instant use in the case of fire or other emergency where the building area served by the means of egress is occupied. An exit passageway shall not be used for any purpose that interferes with a means of egress.

**1031.2.1 Security Device.** Any security device or system that emits any medium that could obscure a means of egress in any building, structure or premise shall be prohibited.

**1031.3 Obstructions.** A Means of egress shall be free from obstructions that would prevent its use, including the accumulation of snow and ice.

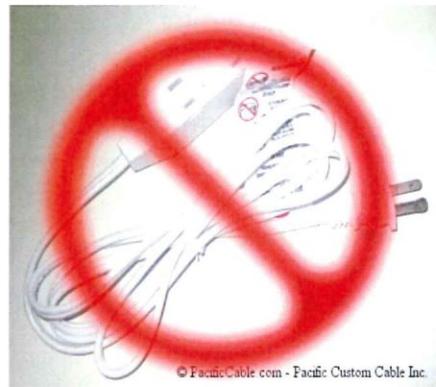
**1031.6 Finishes, furnishings and decorations.** Means of egress doors shall be maintained in such a manner as to be distinguishable from adjacent construction and finishes such that the doors are easily recognizable as doors. Furnishings, decorations or other objects shall not be placed so as to obstruct exits, access thereto, egress therefrom, or visibility thereof. Hangings and draperies shall not be placed over exit doors or otherwise be located to conceal or obstruct an exit. Mirrors shall not be placed on exit doors. Mirrors shall not be placed in or adjacent to any exit in such a manner as to confuse the direction of exit.

## ***SECTION 605 Electrical Equipment, Wiring and Hazards***

**605.4 Multi-plug adaptors:** Multi-plug adaptors, such as cube adaptors, unfused plug strips or any other device not complying with the building code and NFPA 70 as listed in rule 1301:7-7-45 of the Administrative Code, shall be prohibited.

### **Misuse of Electrical Extension Cords**

Only approved circuit breaker protected outlet-strips should be used. Strips should not be plugged into each other, they should connect directly to an outlet.



Overloaded extensions cords can overheat and cause a fire. A circuit breaker protected style outlet strip will “trip” or shut off if it becomes overloaded, decreasing the chance of a fire.

**605.5 Extension cords:** Extension cords and flexible cords shall not be a substitute for permanent wiring. Extension cords and flexible cords shall not be affixed to structures; extended through walls, ceilings or floors, or under doors or floor coverings; nor shall such cords be subject to environmental damage or physical impact. Extension cords shall be used only with portable appliances.

## ***SECTION 103 State and Political Subdivision (Local) Fire Codes***

**103.2 The state fire code is a minimum statewide standard.** This code shall constitute the minimum standards for safeguarding life and property from fire and explosion in this state. No political subdivision with the statutory authority to promulgate a local fire code may enact a local fire code, or parts thereof, or authorize a variance or waiver to such local fire code by any means, that provide a lower threshold of such safeguards or violate accepted engineering practice involving

public safety. Only the State Fire Marshal, in accordance with paragraph (D)(4)(104.8) of this rule or the state board of building appeals pursuant to section 3781.19 of the Revised Code may authorize a variance to any provisions of this code. Consistent with this paragraph, a political subdivision may promulgate fire code provisions that meet or exceed the minimum safety requirements as set forth in this code.

#### ***SECTION 104 General Authority and Responsibilities***

**104.1 General.** The fire code official is hereby authorized to enforce the provisions of this code and to the extent the state fire marshal has not rendered an interpretation or issued a “Technical Bulletin” regarding a particular topic, the fire code official shall have the authority to render interpretations of this code, and to adopt policies, procedures, rules and regulations in order to clarify the application of its provisions.

