

Standard No. 1103.3-3

Kern County Fire Department
Fire Prevention



Decorative Materials in Schools

Fire Marshal

Date: December 3, 2002

This Standard is promulgated in accordance with Section 101.4 of the Kern County Fire Code and is an official interpretation of Section 1103.3.3.1 of the Kern County Fire Code, Section 3.08 of Title 19 California Code of Regulations and Section 10-2.4 of NFPA 101 which regulate the use of decorative materials in schools.

BACKGROUND

Section 1103.3.3.1 of the Kern County Fire Code requires decorative materials in schools to be flame resistant or maintained in an approved manner. The pertinent parts of that section are as follows:

“Combustible decorative material used in...Group E Occupancies...shall be flame resistant as determined by procedures set forth in Section 1103.3.3.

Exceptions: 1. ...

2. Educational materials and product brochures that are stored, distributed and maintained in an approved manner.
3. ...
4. Individual decorative items of a size and separated from others, as approved.”

California Code of Regulations, Title 19, Section 3.08 regulates the use of decorative materials in schools and reads as follows:

“In every Group A, E, I, R-1 and D Occupancies all drapes, hangings, curtains, drops, and all other decorative material, including Christmas trees, that would tend to increase the fire and panic hazard shall be made from a nonflammable material, or shall be treated and maintained in a flame-retardant condition by means of a flame-retardant solution or process approved by the State Fire Marshal, as set forth in Subchapter 8, Chapter 1, Title 19, CAC. Exits, exit lights, fire alarm sending stations, wet standpipe hose cabinets, and fire extinguisher locations shall not be concealed, in whole or in part, by any decorative material.”

Further restrictions for artwork and teaching material are stated in Section 15.7.3.1 of NFPA 101 which reads as follows:

“Artwork and teaching materials shall be permitted to be attached directly to the walls and shall not exceed 20 percent of the wall area.”

These combined sections basically do not allow any decorative material in schools that is not flame-retardant treated or made from nonflammable materials. This would effectively prohibit the display of student-produced artwork or teaching materials. All materials used for decorative or educational purposes, (other than student produced work,) including background material,

Standard No. 1103.3-3

Kern County Fire Department
Fire Prevention



Decorative Materials in Schools

Fire Marshal

Date: December 3, 2002

must be made from non-flammable or flame resistive material, or treated and maintained in a flame retardant condition.

REQUIREMENTS

In order to provide a fire safe environment, it is important to limit the amount of material that would contribute to fire spread and intensity. However, it is also important to partner with schools to help provide an environment conducive to learning. Therefore, in order to provide a reasonable, consistent application of this code section, the following limits shall be enforced:

1. All decorative or educational materials, (other than student produced work,) including background material, shall be made from non-flammable or fire resistant material, or shall be treated and maintained in a flame retardant condition.
2. Three dimensional materials with a thickness exceeding 1" shall not exceed 20% of the total wall area and must be made from fire resistant materials. Treatment of materials on-site will not be acceptable.
3. Child prepared artwork which is not fire resistant material or flame-retardant treated may not exceed 20% of the total wall area.
4. Any flame retardant solution or fire resistant materials used shall be approved by the California State Fire Marshal. Documentation shall be kept regarding application and substance identification. Materials shall be maintained to retain efficacy.
5. Non-flame retardant materials shall be securely affixed on all sides to the wall.
6. No materials shall be affixed to, or within, 2 feet of exit doors, alarm pull stations, fire extinguishers or exit signs. Outlets, light switches and electrical panels shall not be covered.
7. Any materials hung from the ceiling shall be at least 3 feet apart, shall be at least 7 feet from the floor and shall be less than 3 feet in the largest dimension.
8. Materials shall not be hung directly on or closer than 36 inches to any classroom heater, or any other flame or heat producing appliance.