
ASCIP

RISK ALERT!

Date: *September 16, 2010*

Attention: *ASCIP Members*

Subject: *Classroom Art*

For some time, ASCIP has encouraged its members to observe reasonable limitations on wall mounted classroom exhibition of student artwork, projects, and related decorations. ASCIP has recommended that schools comply with Section 31-3.4 of the National Fire Protective Association (NFPA) 101 Life Safety Code (a voluntary standard in California) which specifies that child prepared art work and teaching materials may be attached directly to walls however they shall not exceed 20 % of the wall area. *California's 2007 Edition of the Building Standards Code (Title 24) has reduced this amount to 10%.*

California's 2007 Edition of the Building Standards Code provided very specific requirements for classroom art and other decorative materials mounted on walls and ceilings. Title 24, Part 9, Section 807.1.2 – Combustible Decorative Materials, states that the permissible amount of decorative materials meeting flame propagation criteria shall not exceed 10% of the aggregate area of walls and ceilings. Window surface area should be included when calculating the “aggregate area.” The 2007 Edition also addresses a previously overlooked area of Group E occupancies – Corridors. Section 807.4.3.2 – Artwork, states that artwork and teaching materials shall be limited to 20% of the wall area in corridors.

The California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 19, Section 3.08, Decorative Materials, states that in every occupancy subject to the regulation (including Group E - Educational occupancies) all decorative materials shall be made of non-flammable materials or shall be treated to be fire retardant through use of a process or materials approved by the State Fire Marshal. The State regulations further prohibit concealing or obstructing exits, exit lights, fire alarm stations, fire hose cabinets, or fire extinguishers by any type of decorative materials.

While in the past there had generally been little emphasis on enforcement of these types of regulations, we have been advised that many Fire Departments are now enforcing State regulations related to school classroom decorations and display of child prepared art work utilizing CCR, Title 19, Section 3.14 of the State Fire Marshal regulations which permits local fire departments to deem 'overloaded' classrooms to be fire hazards.

ASCIP recommends that each District review its teaching guidelines to ensure that classrooms are not overloaded with child artwork and project materials. Purchasing departments should, wherever available, order only art rolls, crepe paper, and similar project materials that are certified to be non-flammable or fire resistive by the manufacturer. The added cost of purchasing safer materials now may prove prudent later if the tragedy of a classroom fire can be avoided.

ASCIP appreciates that all school administrators and teachers attempt to make the classroom conducive to the educational process. However, when the risks of fire and potential disaster outweigh the benefits of continuing such practices, the decision to seek safe alternatives becomes imperative. ASCIP Districts seeking assistance in meeting these classroom safety requirements may contact ASCIP staff at any time.

Related Risk Alerts: [Classroom Art 1996 Edition](#)