



SAN RAMON VALLEY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT Information Bulletin

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DECORATIVE MATERIALS IN SCHOOLS AND CLASSROOMS

The 2007 California Fire Code defines Decorative Materials as “All materials applied over the building interior finish for decorative, acoustical or other effect (such as curtains, draperies, fabrics, streamers and surface coverings) and all other materials utilized for decorative effect (such as batting, cloth, cotton, hay, stalks, straw, vines, leaves, trees, moss and similar items), including foam plastics and materials containing foam plastics. Decorative materials do not include floor coverings, ordinary window shades, interior finish and materials 0.025 inch (0.64 mm) or less in thickness applied directly to and adhering tightly to a substrate.”

Using the above definition, student artwork and teaching materials on ordinary paper that is securely attached directly to a wall would not be considered Decorative Materials. Therefore classrooms can be decorated with colored paper, student projects and teaching materials as long as the thickness does not exceed 0.025 inch (0.64 mm) and is applied directly to and adhering tightly to the wall.

In regards to all other items (items that meet the definition of Decorative Materials or exceeds 0.025 inch (0.64 mm) or is not applied directly to a substrate) Section 807.1.2 of the 2007 California Fire Code states: “The permissible amount of decorative materials meeting the flame propagation performance criteria of NFPA 701 shall not exceed 10 percent of the aggregate area of walls and ceilings.” Meeting the flame propagation performance criteria of NFPA 701 (NFPA 701 is a flame retardant criteria) does not mean that the materials will not burn, only that they are going to spread flames relatively slowly. These materials are, therefore, limited to a maximum of 10-percent of the total wall and ceiling area of the space under consideration.

In regards to artwork and teaching materials in the corridors of Educational Occupancies, Section 807.4.3.2 of the 2007 California Fire Code states: “Artwork and teaching materials shall be limited on the walls of corridors to not more than 20 percent of the wall area.” This requirement applies only to corridors and was intended to limit the potential combustibility levels of artwork in critical areas of the means of egress system.

If you have questions regarding this Information Bulletin, please contact:
San Ramon Valley Fire Prevention Division at (925) 838-6600