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Explanation of 527 CMR 10.09
Governing School Work

Below is a summary of the revised regulation governing the display of teaching materials, student work, artwork, etc. within schools as detailed in the State Fire Code. The State Fire Code applies to all schools, other than business training or vocational training, as long as they accommodate five or more persons for educational purposes through the 12th grade. This code applies to child day care facilities, which provides care for children more than 2 years nine months old. In all cases, the material shall be attached directly to the wall to eliminate an air space behind the materials.

The major changes to this regulation are:

1. This regulation now looks at paper materials, as a whole. The regulation no longer looks at student work, artwork and teaching materials. It is felt that this provides for less confusion, as to what is actually covered by the regulation.
2. Clearly identifies Plexiglas, as not being an acceptable form of covering.
3. Allows the use of flame retardant paper materials.
4. Allows paper materials in corridors, and assembly areas to cover up to 10% of a wall area in schools without automatic sprinklers. In these areas, the 10% is based upon the surface area of any one wall, not the aggregate of all walls. The density of the material is capped at 72 sq. ft. per grouping and limited by a 6ft. vertical and 12 ft. horizontal run. The groups are required to be separated by a distance equal to the horizontal width of the largest adjacent group.
5. Facilities that have automatic sprinklers in accordance with the State Building Code can now cover up to 50% of the applicable wall area in accordance with the same density restrictions.

Clarification of terms used within the regulation by the Office of the State Fire Marshal:

1. Flame retardant paper material – generally a paper material that has been treated by chemicals, processes or coatings that create a product that does not ignite readily, or propagate flaming under small to moderate fire exposure.
2. Paper materials – generally any readily combustible material made from paper.
3. Exit access passageways – a portion of a corridor, which leads to an entrance or exit.

4. Corridors – An enclosed passageway, which limits the means of egress to a single path of travel.
5. Exits and enclosed exit stairs – the portion of a means of egress which is separated from all other spaces of a building or structure by construction or protected openings.
6. Assembly areas – an area of the building with a legal occupancy load, posted by the building official, of greater than 50 people.

Classrooms:

- Classrooms can cover up to 20% of the total wall area, including windows and doors in the calculation, with paper materials in schools without automatic sprinklers and up to 50% of the total wall area in schools equipped throughout with automatic sprinklers.
- Paper materials are not permitted to cover or be within 5 ft. of an egress door.

Exit access passageways, corridors and assembly areas:

- Paper materials shall not exceed 10% of any wall area (not the total wall area) in schools without automatic sprinklers and up to 50% of any wall area in schools equipped throughout with automatic sprinklers.
- The maximum grouping of material shall be 12 ft. horizontally and 6ft. vertically. In schools without automatic sprinklers the space between the groups shall be equal to the horizontal width of the largest adjacent group. In schools equipped with automatic sprinklers the space between the groups shall be equal to one half the horizontal width of the largest adjacent group.
- Paper materials are not permitted to cover or be within 5 ft. of an egress door.

Exceptions are:

- Exit signage and evacuation plans required by the State Fire Code.
- Paper materials in fully enclosed viewing cabinets with glass or polycarbonate viewing panels or papers covered with glass or polycarbonate.
- Flame retardant paper material.

Exits and Enclosed Exit stairs:

- The display of paper materials shall not be permitted.