



POLICY:

REGULATION: EBD FIRE SAFETY PROCEDURES IN SCHOOLS

EXHIBIT:

In 1986, MAST forwarded a letter to all school boards requesting compliance with the Fire Commissioner's request that limits be set on the amount of paper and other combustible materials being used to illustrate class work or used as classroom decoration. There was good compliance at that time and we are now requesting that school once again be made aware of the Manitoba Fire Code and the regulations that particularly apply to schools.

The reason why this request is being made by the Fire Commissioner's Office and the Manitoba Schools Insurance Program at this time is because an excess of decorative material was seen in many elementary schools last year. In some places, the amount of material was truly excessive making passage difficult and cleaning next to impossible. It is also important to remember that the Fire Code is law and if a law is broken then someone is guilty. If there was a serious fire or loss of life there will certainly be an official inquiry and any infractions of the law will be clearly exposed. Persons responsible for breaking the law would most likely be charged and consequences can include large fines and /or a prison sentence.

The Fire Commissioner and the Manitoba Schools Insurance Program want to develop and maintain fire safety procedures based on our concern for the safety of our children and our approach will continue at this time knowing that all teachers and administrators want to do what is right.

I am therefore asking all superintendents to discuss this material with their principals prior to school opening. At the present time our schools are clean and paper is not a problem. If teachers follow the regulations attached and limit their artwork accordingly then there should be no problems as the school year unfolds.

I can also assure principals and teaches that we do have school fires in Manitoba every year. Many are small and have remained so because of the safety features built into schools but there have also been a few major fires that have destroyed school buildings. The school buildings in general are fairly safe but the contents will burn and the heat and smoke from the contents can kill people and spread the fire throughout our concrete and steel buildings. The precautions that we are talking about in this letter will help to restrict a potential fire.

Member of the Manitoba Fire Service including provincial officers and local fire chiefs will visit schools this year and assist you in any way possible to prevent fires. They are well aware of this correspondence and will enforce the Manitoba Fire Code to the best of their ability. I am hopeful that this will not be necessary if we all do our part to keep the fire risk as low as possible.

The MAST risk prevention officer is available to answer any questions or concerns that you may have regarding fire safety or any other safety concerns in your schools.

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EXHIBIT:

Fire Safety Procedures in Manitoba Schools

This correspondence is designed to cover some of the major potential fire hazards in schools but does not include all potential hazards. Consult your local fire chief or MAST's risk manager for additional assistance. The sections of the regulations found in the Manitoba Fire Code that apply to the display of material and flame spread are quoted below. This will be followed by a commentary on how these regulations apply to schools.

Excerpts From Manitoba Fire Code

2.1.1.1. (1) Part 2 of this Code provides for the safety of the occupants in existing buildings, the elimination or control of fire hazards in and around buildings, the maintenance of certain life safety systems in buildings and for the establishing of fire safety plan in those occupancies where necessary.

Section 2.3 Interior Finishing, Furnishing and Decorative Materials

Subsection 2.3.1 General

2.3.1.1. The interior finish material that forms part of the interior surface of a floor, wall, partition or ceiling shall conform to the National Building Code of Canada.

2.3.1.2. (1) Movable partitions or screens, including acoustical screens, shall have a flame-spread rating equal to that required for the interior finish of the area in which they are located.

(2) Decorative materials on walls or ceilings shall have a flame-spread rating not greater than that required for the interior finish of the space in which they are located.

Section 2.3.2 Flame Spread

2.3.2.1.(1) Drapes, curtains and other decorative materials including textiles and films used in buildings shall meet the requirements for a high degree of flame resistance as described in Note 4 of CAN 2-4.2, "Textile Test Methods," Method 27.1, when such drapes, curtains and other decorative materials are used in

- (a) any Group A or Group B, Division 1 occupancy,
- (b) any lobby or exit, or
- (c) any open floor areas in any Group D, E and F occupancy exceeding 500m, except when the floor area is divided into fire compartments not exceeding 500 m² in area and separated from the remainder of the floor area by fire separations having at least a 1 h fire-resistance rating

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2.3.2.2. Flameproofing treatments shall be renewed as often as required to ensure that the material will pass the match flame test in NFPA 701, “Standard Methods of Fire Tests for Flame-Resistant Textiles and Films”

Section 2.4 Fire Hazards

Subsection 2.4.1. Combustible Materials

2.4.1.1. Combustible waste materials in buildings shall not be permitted to accumulate in quantities or locations that will constitute an undue fire hazard.

2.4.1.2. Combustible materials shall not be permitted to accumulate in any part of an elevator shaft, ventilation shaft, stairway or fire escape.

2.4.1.3. Horizontal concealed spaces, such as crawl and ceiling spaces, shall not be used for the storage of combustible materials.

Section 2.5 Fire Department Access to Buildings

Subsection 2.5.1. General

2.5.1.1. Fire department vehicles shall have direct access to at least 1 face of every building by means of a street, yard or private roadway in conformance with the requirements of the National Building Code of Canada.

2.5.1.2. Access panels or windows provided to facilitate access for fire fighting operations shall not be obstructed by vehicles, vegetation, signs or any form of construction.

2.5.1.3. Where access to a roof is provided for fire fighting purposes, keys shall be provided for locked roof access doors in an acceptable location accessible to the fire fighters.

2.5.1.4. Streets, yards and private roadways provided for fire department access shall be maintained so as to be ready for use at all times by fire department vehicles.

2.5.1.5. Vehicles shall not be parked to obstruct access by fire department vehicles and signs be posted prohibiting such parking.

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Section 2.7 Safety to Life

Subsection 2.7.1. Means of Egress

2.7.1.1. Means of egress shall be provided in buildings in conformance with the National Building Code of Canada.

2.7.1.9. Corridors used by the public and exits shall be maintained free of obstructions.

Section 2.10 Day-Care Centres

Subsection 2.10.3. Combustible Materials

2.10.3.1. Combustible materials such as artwork and teaching materials, which are attached to walls, shall not exceed 20 per cent of the areas of such walls.

2.10.3.2. Waste receptacles shall be made of noncombustible materials.

2.10.3.3. Flammable and combustible liquids shall be stored in conformance with Part 4 and in areas inaccessible to children.

Subsection 4.2.6 Business and Personal Services, Educational and Institutional Occupancies.

4.2.6.1. Except as required in Subsection 4.2.7., this Subsection shall apply to the storage and handling of flammable and combustible liquids in business and personal services and institutional occupancies and shall include nonresidential schools, universities and colleges.

4.2.6.2. The storage of flammable and combustible liquids in buildings described in Article 4.2.6.1. shall be limited to reasonable amounts of material essential for the operation of office equipment, maintenance, demonstration or experimental work.

4.2.6.3. Flammable and combustible liquids in quantities in excess of those permitted in Article 4.2.6.2. shall be kept in acceptable closed metal containers and stored in a storage cabinet conforming to Subsection 4.2.10 or in a storage room conforming to Subsection 4.2.9. and having no openings communicating directly with the public portions of the building.

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Subsection 2.3.1.2. (1) would actually allow the fire service to prohibit anything with a flame spread rating greater than the interior finish of the area in which they are located. In other words then paper could not be placed on a concrete block wall because the flame spread of paper is much greater than concrete. The fire service however recognizes a need to display some material and are prepared to continue with this policy. "Combustible materials such as artwork and teaching materials which are attached to classroom walls shall not exceed 20% of the area of such walls. However, at no time shall teaching materials be displayed that would expose persons to undue risk from fire."

Recognizing that means of egress must be free from obstructions (2.7.1.9.) – the following precautions are stressed: Paper in corridors may not exceed 5% of the wall surface and all corners must be attached to a bulleting board (or tack board). This does not permit mobiles or other decorations that cannot be attached at all corners. Also, classroom doors must not be covered with decorative materials. Paper must be kept at least 10 feet away from all exterior entrance and exit doors.

To maintain a corridor free of obstructions, we cannot permit desks, computer stations or similar items to be placed in corridors. Corridors were designed to permit QUICK evacuation and no blockage (including partial) is permitted. The use of wedges is not permitted in public buildings and doors shall be closed or held open by magnetic devices that release if the fire alarm is activated.

2.3.2.1. (1) Flame Spread – also covers textiles and the requirement of flame resistance. Old sofas and other furnishings found in the home cannot be brought into the school unless an appropriate flame retardant is applied and proof of this application must be kept on file in the school office. If these furnishings do not have the appropriate flame retardant, they shall be removed from the school. Other items to be concerned about are curtains, drapes and mats. These items when purchased by the school shall meet the proper flame restrictions as per National Building Code of Canada.

2.4.1.3. – does not allow for the storage of combustible materials in crawl spaces. Schools must not allow the crawl space to be considered as a storage area.

2.5. – Fire Department Access to Buildings means all entrances and exits must be clear with no vehicles blocking access to the doors. No parking is allowed in front of doors or exits.

4.2.6. – discusses the storage and handling of flammable and combustible liquids and requests the use of storage cabinets to contain these liquids. One of the liquids of great concern is gasoline. Many schools in Manitoba have a strict rule prohibiting gasoline storage of any amount and we applaud that decision. Mowers and snow blowers are stored elsewhere and gasoline purchased only when necessary. There are a few schools where this is not possible because of the distance to the nearest commercial gasoline supply and in those situation, gasoline must be kept in a U.L.C. approved metal safety can with a spring loaded cap to take care of expansion. Please note that the plastic storage cans are NOT acceptable for gasoline storage or transfer in a school.

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The plastic cans are designed for temporary outdoor storage and transfer and the ideal situation, involves purchase of gas at a commercial location and transport to a boat where the boat tank is then immediately filled. Again, plastic containers are NOT approved for school or indoor use. A further requirement is that the metal safety can if brought into a school is kept in a room, which is vented at floor level to the exterior. If you can remain free of any gasoline storage, this is preferable.

Ten fire drills per year are mandatory in all schools and shall be recorded by the principal.

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REGULATION: EBD FIRE PREVENTION

EXHIBIT:

DISPLAY OF MATERIALS ON CLASSROOM WALLS

The policy of the Provincial Fire Commissioner's Office is that combustible materials such as art work and teaching materials which are attached to classroom walls shall not exceed 20% of the area and in corridors may not exceed 5% of wall surface and all corners must be attached to a bulletin board (or tack board). (Refer to MAST Memo pages 100 (a) to (h)).

Principals shall ensure that the provincial regulation is respected.

CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS

Only artificial Christmas trees will be allowed in the schools. All other decorations should be of non-combustible material whenever possible. At no time should combustible materials of any kind be allowed on or around doors.

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