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Introduction

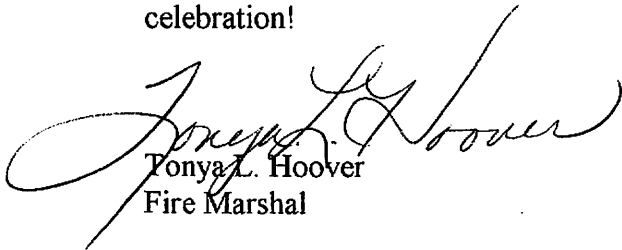
A Message from the Fire Marshal

This booklet is being provided to assist School Administrators and Event Coordinators in providing a fire safe environment for events like Junior and Senior Proms, Graduation celebrations, haunted houses and other activities requiring decorations.

The Fire District continues to be involved with the planning and inspection of these events. We have found the theme may change but the requirements and questions are the same. With the help of concerned parents and school officials, fire safety issues and concerns can be addressed and corrected prior to an event.

Within this booklet you will find information regarding many areas of fire code requirement and concern. These requirements and concerns range from temporary electrical installation, flame retarding of decorations, and exiting requirements to answering questions that have been asked in the past.

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District hopes these pieces of paper will provide you and your group with the information needed to have a fire safe event. Good luck with your celebration!


Tonya L. Hoover
Fire Marshal



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Fire Safety Requirements

For

School Events

Provided by:
Moraga-Orinda Fire District
Fire Prevention
(925) 258-4525
or
(925) 258-4520

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DEFINITIONS

Flame-resistant Material is material that has been modified in its chemical composition by impregnation, coating or has inherent composition that makes the material resistant to ignition and combustion when exposed to a small ignition source.

Flame-Retardant is an approved chemical compound or mixture which when applied in an approved manner to any fabric or other material, will render such fabric or material incapable of supporting combustion.

Flammable Material is a material that will readily ignite from common sources of heat.

Decorative Materials are materials such as curtains, draperies, streamers, other surface coverings, cloth, cotton batting, straw, vines, leaves, trees, and moss used for decorative effect – acoustical or other. They do not include floor coverings, ordinary window shades or materials 1/28 inch or less in thickness applied directly (glued) to a noncombustible backing.

Exit is a continuous and unobstructed means of egress to a public way and shall include aisles, doors, doorways, gates, corridors, ramps, stairways, enclosures, exit passageways, and exit courts and yards.

Flame spread test in the field is the procedure conducted on-site to determine the flame resistance of the material tested.

LEGAL AUTHORITY

The California State Fire Marshal's Office requires that "all materials and decorations which may contribute to the spread of fire are to be maintained in a flame resistive condition."

What does this mean? Any material, cloth, paper, wood, etc. which is brought into the building (not part of the structure) shall be treated with an approved flame-retardant chemical or be manufactured of flame-retardant materials.

School site administrators should be included and fully apprised of all aspects of these events. *The School District and site administrators have the ultimate responsibility that all requirements are met.*

The Fire District wishes to stress that flame-retardant materials only slow the spread of fire and will not completely eliminate this hazard. Through the purchase of decorations manufactured of flame-retardant materials, in addition to *your* efforts, the rapid spread of fire will be minimized.

SUBMITTAL PROCESS

The Fire District requires that the process outlined below be followed to assist both the event coordinators and the Fire District in making proms and graduation/all-nighters safe, memorable, and less complicated.

- Submit to the Fire District two sets of clear and accurate drawings showing a **complete** floor plan.
- Drawings **shall** include locations of exits, extinguishers, emergency lights, decorated units, fire alarm pull stations location, fire hose cabinets (if any) and fences.
- Drawings shall be submitted as early as possible. This helps to facilitate necessary changes prior to construction.
- Persons responsible for flame-retarding decorations may contact the district to set an appointment to test treated items. It may be necessary for the inspector to retest (at his/her discretion) various decorations once they are in place. Inspectors will keep in mind the efforts and cost that parents have put into these events so as not to spoil all of your efforts. Remember, treating paper prior to painting reduces the “running” of paint.
- Experience has shown that appointments are recommended to be made as early as possible to inspect the actual setup. This office will request to inspect **all** prom and/or grad nights the day the event is open for review by the parents.

EXITS AND EXITING

- All exits, exit signs, and emergency lights shall **not** be blocked by decorations.
- Access to exits shall remain clear at all times.
- Access width to the exit shall **not** be less than the width of the exit door and frame.
- When fully decorated, a minimum of two exits shall be visible from any point in the facility.
- No exit doors shall be chained, wired or tied in the closed position.
- Decorations on the exterior of exits shall be installed in such a manner not to obstruct the use and full operation of the exit. The locations and arrangement shall not create a hazard to persons using the exit.

FIRE PROTECTION EQUIPMENT FIRE ALARM DEVICES

- Fire protection equipment such as fire extinguishers and fire hoses shall not be covered or blocked by the decorations.
- Additional fire extinguishers may be required depending on access, visibility, and fire loading within the structure.
- Fire alarm pull stations shall not be obstructed. Heat and/or smoke detectors shall be kept accessible at all times.
- All parents should be advised as to the locations of all fire extinguishers and fire alarm pull stations.
- Buildings equipped with automatic fire sprinklers shall not have the sprinkler heads blocked by decorations.
- Fire sprinkler system piping **shall not** be used to support decorations.

ELECTRICAL

Extension cords are allowed to be used providing the following safety guidelines are followed:

- Electrical wires and cords may only be attached to the structure when approved shelving/support devices are used.
-No staples or nails through cords will be allowed-
- Cords shall be grounded type (3 wire) when using equipment/appliances equipped with grounds.
- Cord rating shall equal or exceed the appliance cord's rating.
- Plug cubes, power taps, and multiplug devices are **prohibited** unless a fuse or breaker is incorporated into the device.
- Using small zip (two wire) cords is approved only when the device being powered is plugged directly into the wall or junction box or a heavy duty type cord, which is plugged into the outlet.
- The splicing of wires is approved only when the connections are located high enough so persons are unable to make contact with the connections. Spliced wires on both sides of the splice shall be secured so the connections **will not** pull apart when pulled on from either side of the splice. Wires which are spliced shall also be protected and secured with wire nuts. These wire nuts shall be taped in place with electrical tape.
- Electrical cords, when placed in pathways, shall be protected and secured in place to assure they will not become loose during the event.

- Electrical devices (outlets, motors, lights) located near water shall be protected with a ground fault interrupter (GFI).

MOST COMMON QUESTIONS

- Q When should the flame-retardant material be applied?
- A Most manufacturers require that the flame-retardant spray or paint be applied to the paper/wood **prior** to any painting operations.
- Q Is it necessary to treat lattice and plywood?
- A It is not required to flame retard wood products that exceed ¼” in thickness. Lattice material normally exceeds the ¼” minimum; however, paper or cloth attached to the lattice **is** required to be treated.
- Q When bamboo, bales of hay, and burlap are used **outside**, are they required to be flame retarded?
- A No, not if the above items are outside and **away** from the exits. Once these items enter the building, they **are** required to be treated. We have found that burlap and hay bales are the most difficult to treat. In some cases, it may be necessary to soak both sides of the burlap and all exposed edges of a hay bale overnight to accomplish the proper levels of flame retardancy. Spraying the flame-retardant chemical has proven **not** to be adequate.
- Q Can tents be used outside?
- A Tents that exceed 200 square feet shall also be approved and tagged by the State Fire Marshal’s office. Tent structures on loan from the military are approved providing they are in a well kept condition. All tents shall have “No Smoking” signs posted and exits clearly marked.

Q Is it safe to assume that decorative material that has been treated, tested, and passed either the previous year or on loan from another school is safe and approved to use for our event?

A **No! Never assume!** Depending on how the decorations are stored, they may or may not be approved. It is important to note and inform the Inspector **exactly** which items are being traded/loaned and to whom, or from what school.

Q Is foam board or Styrofoam required to be treated and what material can be used?

A Yes. Both these materials (foam and Styrofoam) are required to be treated; in fact, these products produce extremely hazardous toxins when burning. Extra care should be taken to assure they are completely covered.

Q What special concerns are there when a “maze” is built, and what does the Fire District want to see as far as safety is concerned?

A Mazes in themselves create a special exiting problem due to their very nature. When designing the layout, please keep in mind that emergency exits may be required and identified as such. Submit drawing and specifications. If the wall/structure is constructed of plastic on wood frames, the plastic is required to be flame retardant.

Q Can rolled plastic be treated successfully to meet the current flame-retardant guidelines?

A At the time this packet is being developed, there is **no** known product that can be applied to rolled or sheet plastic.

Q Are there special requirements when decorating an outside area covered by the building's overhang?

A The requirements are not special. However, some considerations regarding the type of materials and amount of decorations, including the location to windows and doors, need to be reviewed. This is one issue which can be addressed early-on during the drawing review period.

Q Can air supported structures or tents be used inside the building?

A Yes. However, both these structures and similar types of structures are required to be approved by the State Fire Marshal's office and **shall** have a State Fire Marshal's tag sewn into the fabric. The supplier of these structures should point out the tag's location in order to save time when the Inspector requests to see it.

Important. Tents and air-supported structures that do not have this tag **will not** be allowed on site.

Q In the event of a fire or any other emergency, what step should the parents take?

A Depending on the emergency, the first thing is to reduce the potential for additional injuries by removing persons from the immediate area. "**EVACUATE.**" The next step is to reduce the spread of the damage (i.e., turning off the electricity or using the fire extinguisher). Contact emergency personnel A.S.A.P. ***USE 9-1-1.***

Remember, your first responsibility is to the students and parents. Evacuate to minimize injuries.

Q Who do we contact first, and how?

A For fire and medical emergencies, dial 9-1-1 and inform the operator of the situation. In a calm and clear voice, provide the following information:

Type of emergency i.e., fire or medical

Location i.e., school and exact location at the school

Phone number i.e., the phone number where the operator can call you back

Always be the last to hang up

Provide assistance to responding equipment by guiding them to the scene. Many schools do not have phones or any other communication device except in the main office which is usually not accessible during these events. The fire alarm is a local alarm. It is **not** connected to the Fire Department or Police Department and will not automatically call the Fire Department.

The Fire District cannot require the use of a portable phone; we would, however, strongly recommend that one be provided for emergencies, if someone feels ill, or even to provide information to concerned parents.

Remember, when you dial 9-1-1 on a cellular phone, you will get the California Highway Patrol, not your local emergency dispatch center.

The direct phone number for the local emergency dispatch center is 930-5531.