

Common Issues for Seasonal Decoration in Schools

This document has been developed by the Surrey Fire Service to assist Surrey School Board administrators and staff in maintaining compliance with the British Columbia Fire Code (BCFC) when decorating for seasonal events. The following excerpts from the BCFC set the framework of compliance:

- Decorative materials on walls or ceiling shall have a flame-spread rating not greater than that required for the interior finish of the space in which they are located. (2.3.1.3.(1).)
- Combustible materials such as artwork and teaching materials that are attached to walls or ceilings in school classrooms shall not cover more than 20% of the area of each wall or ceiling. (2.3.1.5.(1).)
- Drapes, curtains and other decorative materials including textiles and films used in buildings shall conform to CAN/ULC-S109, "Flame Tests of Flame-Resistant Fabrics and Films," when such drapes, curtains and other decorative materials are used in any assembly occupancy.

Based on past inspections, the following list has been developed as a **general** guideline. The list is **not** exhaustive and situations will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the fire inspector.

1. Installation of decorations shall be limited to prevent an undue fire hazard.

Acceptable Examples

- One 5' artificial pre-lit Christmas tree located in a classroom not obstructing egress is acceptable.
- The installation of decorations on walls and ceilings less than 20% of the surface area is acceptable.

Not Acceptable Examples

- The installation of 30 year old incandescent Christmas lights attached to the wall with staples through the middle of the electrical cord with tinsel wrapped around the cord is not acceptable.
- Decorations covering the classroom walls floor to ceiling, recreating Santa's workshop at the North Pole is not acceptable.

2. Exits and egress pathways must be maintained clear and unobstructed at all times.

- Decorations should be installed in locations and a manner that does not limit, hinder, or prevent egress for occupants of the building.
- Parking Santa's sleigh and eight reindeer in the middle of the hallway obstructing the main exit of the school is not acceptable.

3. Electrical power to all decorations must be turned off while the classroom or school is unattended.

4. Open flame is strictly prohibited.

5. Non-living natural vegetation is strictly prohibited.

This document does not supersede or override the policies and restrictions set by the School District or the requirements of the British Columbia Fire Code. For additional information please review NFPA 1 for industry best practices.