This policy is promulgated in accordance with Section 104.1 of the 2018 International Fire Code (IFC) and is an official interpretation of Sections 807.2, 807.3, & 807.5.2 of the 2018 edition of the IFC.

The following shall apply to decorative materials in new and existing educational buildings:
Section 807.2 of the 2018 edition of the IFC reads as follows: “In other than Groups A, B, E, I, M and R-1 and in dormitories in Group R-2, curtains, draperies, fabric hangings and other similar combustible decorative materials suspended from walls or ceilings shall comply with Section 807.3 and shall not exceed 10 percent of the specific wall or ceiling area to which they are attached.” Section 807.5.2 of the 2018 edition of the IFC reads as follows: “Group E occupancies shall comply with Sections 807.5.2.1 through 807.5.2.3.” Therefore, it is the opinion of the Fire Marshal that at no time shall the display/storage of decorative material or artwork/teaching materials exceed the maximums as described in this policy. The following is the Des Moines Fire Prevention Bureau’s policy on decorative materials in new and existing educational buildings:

1.) Decorative materials shall be defined as: a material with a thickness greater than .025 inches.
   • Therefore: paper, thin poster board, posters, and other wall coverings less than .025 inches do not contribute to the maximums listed for decorative materials.

2.) Noncombustible decorative material shall not be limited.
   • Example: A non-combustible decorative tin wall covering could cover every square inch of all 4 walls of the classroom or corridor.

3.) Decorative material in classrooms and other rooms shall not exceed 10 percent of the wall or ceiling area to which the material is attached.
   • Example 1: A 20’ x 20’ classroom (400 ft² ceiling area) would be allowed to have 40 ft² of decorative material attached to the ceiling.
   • Example 2: A 40’ x 8’ classroom wall (320 ft² wall area) would be allowed to have 32 ft² of decorative material attached to the wall.

The following items do NOT fall under the decorative material provisions:

4.) Clothing and personal effects shall NOT be stored in corridors or lobbies, unless one of the following exceptions apply:
   a. The corridor or lobby is protected by an automatic fire sprinkler system.
   b. The corridor or lobby is protected by an automatic smoke detection system.
   c. The clothing and personal effects are stored in metal lockers.

5.) Artwork and teaching materials shall be limited on the walls of corridors and lobbies to no more than 20 percent of the wall area.
   • Note: This refers to artwork and teaching materials which would also include any decorative materials.
   • Example: A 100’ x 8’ hallway (800 ft² of wall on each side, 1600 ft² total) would be allowed to have 320 ft² of artwork or teaching materials attached to the walls.

Any comments or questions regarding the above information may be submitted to:

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