

School Decorative Materials

2025 California Fire Code §807 - Group E decorative materials, artwork and teaching materials

Purpose. Schools use artwork, bulletin boards, curtains, teaching aids and seasonal decorations as part of normal instruction. The fire code limits combustible materials so decorations do not accelerate fire growth, block exits or conceal safety equipment.

1. General Decorative Material Rules

- Highly flammable or explosive decorative materials are prohibited.
- Furnishings and decorations may not obstruct exits, access to exits or visibility of exits.
- Combustible fabrics, curtains, draperies and similar suspended decorative materials must meet applicable flame-performance requirements.
- California Title 19 requires decorative material that increases fire/panic hazard in Group E occupancies to be nonflammable or maintained in an approved flame-retardant condition.
- Decorations may not conceal exit lights, manual fire alarm devices, standpipe hose cabinets or fire extinguishers.

Code reference: 2025 CFC §§807.1-807.3; CCR Title 19 §3.08

2. Artwork in Corridors

Artwork and teaching materials on corridor walls in Group E occupancies are limited to not more than 20 percent of the wall area.

Code reference: 2025 CFC §807.5.2.2

3. Artwork in Classrooms

Artwork and teaching materials on classroom walls in Group E occupancies are limited to not more than 50 percent of the specific wall area to which the material is attached.

Code reference: 2025 CFC §807.5.2.3

Location	Maximum artwork / teaching material coverage
Corridor walls	20% of wall area
Classroom walls	50% of the specific wall area

4. Clothing and Personal Effects in Corridors/Lobbies

Clothing and personal effects are generally not stored in Group E corridors and lobbies. The CFC provides exceptions for corridors protected by an approved automatic sprinkler system, corridors protected by an approved fire alarm system, or storage in metal lockers when required egress width is maintained.

Code reference: 2025 CFC §807.5.2.1

5. Curtains, Drapes and Fabric Hangings

- Combustible curtains, draperies, fabric hangings and similar suspended materials in Group E must comply with the CFC flame-performance provisions.
- General combustible decorative material limits can apply to the wall/ceiling area on which the material is installed.
- Documentation of flame resistance or State Fire Marshal-approved treatment should be retained when required.
- Do not assume a product labeled “flame resistant” is acceptable without the required listing/test/treatment documentation.

Code reference: 2025 CFC §§807.2-807.3; CCR Title 19, Division 1, Chapter 8

6. Seasonal Decorations and Natural Vegetation

- Natural cut Christmas trees are restricted in Group E and may be permitted only where the applicable sprinkler exception is met.

- Natural decorative vegetation may not block egress and must be kept away from open flames/heat.
- Candles and open flames are prohibited on or near decorative vegetation.
- Only listed electrical wiring and lighting may be used on natural vegetation.

Code reference: 2025 CFC §806

7. Classroom / Corridor Checklist

- Corridor artwork coverage at or below 20%.
- Classroom artwork coverage at or below 50%.
- Exit doors, corridors and exit signs fully visible and unobstructed.
- Required fire alarm devices and extinguishers not concealed.
- Fabric decorations meet flame-resistance requirements.
- No highly flammable decorative materials.
- Clothing/personal effects stored only under an allowed corridor-storage condition.
- Seasonal trees/vegetation comply with CFC §806.
- Electrical decorations are listed and free of damaged wiring.

Primary References

- 2025 California Fire Code §§806 and 807, including §§807.5.2.1-807.5.2.3
- California Code of Regulations, Title 19, Division 1, §3.08 and Chapter 8 flame-retardant requirements
- NFPA 701 or other test standards referenced by the CFC/Title 19 for applicable fabrics and decorative materials

This handout is an informational summary. It does not replace the adopted code, approved plans, permit conditions, State licensing requirements, or determinations of the fire code official. Project-specific requirements may vary.