



Department of Fire Services

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

School Fire Safety Reference: Massachusetts Laws and Regulations

This reference document is intended to assist fire chiefs and school officials with common school fire safety requirements under Massachusetts General Laws and 527 CMR 1.00, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Fire Safety Code. For additional resources, contact the Fire Safety Division at 978-567-3375.

School Fire Drills

527 CMR 1.00, s. 20.2.4.2.1.4

Fire departments are required to conduct fire drills in schools at least four times a year. Within three days of the start of school, students must be familiarized with the exit plan or participate in a drill.

Multi-Hazard & MERP Plans

*Acts of 2000, Chapter 159, Section 363
M.G.L. c. 69, s. 8A*

School superintendents are required to meet with the local police and fire chiefs to develop a Multi-Hazard Evacuation Plan. Schools must also develop a Medical Emergency Response Plan and resubmit it every three years. DFS has a *School Bomb Threat Response Guide* pamphlet to help with all-hazard planning.

Place of Assembly (Theatres, Auditoriums, Gyms, Cafeterias)

527 CMR 1.00, s. 20.1.5.10.4

Schools need a certificate of inspection from the building official, which will set the occupancy limit. Severe penalties may be imposed for violating occupancy limits and blocked egress. The regulations on school decorations, drapery, and curtains may also be relevant.

Crowd Manager Requirements

527 CMR 1.00, s. 20.1.5.6

A crowd manager is needed in facilities that feature live bands or recorded music generating above-normal sound levels and which have a specific area designated for dancing. Schools might need a trained crowd manager on-duty when holding school dances. For details on crowd manager requirements or to take the online training program, please visit www.mass.gov/dfs and search for *crowd manager*.

Upholstered Furniture, Re-Upholstered Furniture, and Molded Chairs

527 CMR 1.00, s. 12.6.2

Upholstered furniture releases toxic smoke when it burns and should be resistant to fire. This section sets requirements for furniture flammability testing. Some requirements under this section are different for sprinklered and unsprinklered buildings.

Decorations, Curtains, Draperies and Window Treatments

527 CMR 1.00, s. 12.6.1

This section sets the flammability certification standards for draperies, curtains, and other hanging or suspended furnishings and decorations.

Theatrical Special Effects

527 CMR 1.00, c. 65

Schools need a permit from the local fire department to use special effects and pyrotechnics, including flash powder and flash paper. Their use must be conducted only by licensed individuals.

Paper Wall Decorations

527 CMR 1.00, s. 20.2.4.4.3

This section regulates how, where, and how much paper decorations may safely be displayed on walls in sprinklered and un-sprinklered buildings. When building new schools, consider this regulation and include covered bulletin board design to safely display paper materials.

Fire Doors

527 CMR 1.00, s. 12.4.1

Blocking or wedging a fire door open is prohibited.

Fire Extinguishers

527 CMR 1.00, s. 13.6

Emergency Wash Stations

527 CMR 1.00, s. 10.23

These sections define where, how many, and what kind of fire extinguishers and emergency wash stations schools need, as well as their testing and inspection requirements. Labs are required to have emergency wash systems (showers) or fire blankets and signage.

Fire Lanes

527 CMR 1.00, c. 18

This chapter covers regulations on designating, maintaining, and preventing the obstruction of fire lanes. Fire lanes must be kept clear at all times.

Fire Protection Systems

527 CMR 1.00, c. 13

This chapter requires schools to inspect, test, and maintain fire alarm, fire sprinkler, and kitchen suppression systems.

Chemistry Labs

527 CMR 1.00, c. 26

Permits and special storage arrangements may be required based on the type and quantity of chemicals stored. Think about the life cycle and disposal requirements of lab chemicals when purchasing or storing them. (See also *527 CMR 1.00, s. 10.23*, for emergency wash stations, fire blankets and signage.)

School Fire Reporting Law

M.G.L. c. 148, s. 2A

State law requires schools to report all fires to the local fire department. It also requires fire departments to report all school fires to the Massachusetts Fire Incident Reporting System (MFIRS).

No Smoking in Schools

20 U.S. Code § 6083

M.G.L. c. 270, s. 22

Smoking is prohibited in most public places in Massachusetts, including all schools, colleges, and universities.

Fire Safety Education

M.G.L. c. 71, s. 1

State law requires public schools to provide instruction on the prevention and treatment of burn injuries, such as that provided by local fire departments through the Department of Fire Services' Student Awareness of Fire Education (SAFE) grant program.