



Superintendent's Circular

NUMBER:
FSE-02
Version 01

FIRE SAFETY PRACTICES

This Circular will remain in effect unless rescinded or superseded by a subsequent version.

As we begin another school year, it is essential that we review and update fire prevention, life safety, and evacuation plans/procedures in all our schools. Accordingly, appropriate communications and cooperation with Fire Department authorities is imperative. The Boston Fire Department and The Office of Emergency Management and Preparedness cite specific areas of concern and responsibility in this directive, which must be brought to your attention.

The following fire safety practices should be incorporated into the fire safety section of your school safety/contingency plan:

*A fire safety checklist (Attachment A) must be completed and readily available in the main office along with appropriate documents including: fire drill reports, fire alarm tests, * fire sprinkler system test, fire extinguisher location document, * fire pump test, AED location, a copy of most recent BFD quarterly inspection report, and Certificate of Occupancy.*

NOTE (*) if applicable:

The Boston Fire Department has directed that school officials designate a member of their school safety team to report to the

main entrance of the school to meet and direct arriving fire department and other public safety personnel in an emergency. This individual is identified as the building coordinator position in your school safety plan and is usually the school custodian.

The building coordinator should be familiar with this circular, your building and fire safety reports, and your fire safety checklist; know the location of fire notification and extinguishing systems; and have access to all areas. Your plan must also identify an alternate person to perform this role in the event your custodian is not available.

FIRE ALARMS

All fire alarm systems must be maintained in working order at all times. It is important to remember that the sounding of any fire alarm box automatically transmits a signal to the Fire Alarm Office, which simultaneously dispatches fire apparatus to the school.

Fire Department regulations and Mass. General Law Chapter 268, Section 32 prohibits the shutting off or tampering with any fire alarm system unless directed to do so by the Fire Department. **Any deficiency or trouble noted with the fire alarm system must be reported immediately to Facilities Management/Fire Alarm Division at 617-635-8300.**

Upon the evacuation of a school building because of an alarm, no person or persons shall re-enter the building without the authorization of the fire officer in charge. The principal/head of school, site coordinator or designee *must*, as a part of their fire drill procedures, establish a command procedure for such evacuations.

Upon the sounding of a fire alarm, approved evacuation

procedures for all building occupants are to be followed immediately, as well as a verification call made to the Fire Department at 911 or 617-343-2880.

Upon arrival, the Boston Fire Department will exercise its authority to order all measures that are deemed necessary for the protection of persons and property. This authority includes building evacuation and reentry.

DOOR LABELS, NUMBERS OR LETTERING SHALL NOT BE REMOVED OR CHANGED

The interior and exterior doors that are numbered within Boston Public Schools should not be removed or changed by anyone except for members of the BPS Facilities Management Team. The numbers and letterings are crucial to Boston Police, Boston Fire and Boston EMS that will need to respond to your school building for an emergency.

Any changes to the numbering or lettering within your school building could disrupt any evacuation or safety plans that already exist within the school.

The existing room numbers are also associated with the school's Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA) Management Plan and the Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) sensors.

If your school is missing any room numbers or lettering, please submit a work order to the Facilities Management Team to ensure any issues are resolved before the start of the school year.

MEANS OF EGRESS

Designated exits in every school must be maintained as means of

egress.

- a. Means of egress must be kept free and clear at all times.
- b. The use of chains, ropes, bars, so-called "dutch locks," or any other unauthorized device that would impede egress is prohibited during times when school buildings are occupied.
- c. No exit door which is intended to be kept closed shall be blocked open, and no device or arrangement shall be used to prevent a door designed to be self-closing or automatic-closing from functioning as intended. Use of wedges to hold corridor and stairwell doors open is prohibited.
- d. Interconnecting doors between rooms must be clear and free of any locks. Fire and smoke doors are not to be propped open with wooden wedges or any other means. This is an illegal practice and prohibited in all schools.

FIRE DRILLS

All schools shall conform to the following fire drill regulations:

- a. The responsible school administrator in charge of the school shall formulate a plan for the protection and evacuation of *all* persons in the event of fire or other emergency and shall include alternate means of egress for all persons involved. Such a plan is to be developed in consultation with appropriate representatives of the Boston Fire Department and BPS Director of Emergency Management and Preparedness.
- b. The principal/head of school, site coordinator or designee shall see that each staff member receives and understands proper instructions on the fire drill procedure specified for the room or area in which that person carries out their duties

before they assume such duties. A log or sign-off list must be maintained at the school which documents staff receipt of procedures and familiarization with fire safety practices.

- c. A fire drill must be conducted *quarterly* (September/first week of school, December, March, and June) involving all students and staff and in accordance with Mass Fire Code, 527 CMR 1.00: 20.2.4.2. A record of each drill is to be documented on the google form available in the [BPS Fire & Safety Drill Report](#) under Central Office Support with The BPS Office of Emergency Management and Preparedness (Safety Services). If you have any questions, please contact [The BPS Office of Emergency Management and Preparedness](#).
- d. Every student in all schools shall be advised of the fire drill procedure and shall take part in a fire drill within three days after school begins in September. Fire drill procedures for particular rooms shall be posted within those rooms. Alternate and obstructed drills shall be exercised; and every other quarter, alternate routes shall be used.
- e. As required by Massachusetts Law, 527 CMR 1.05, 20.2.4.2.1.4, the head of the Fire Department, or person designated by them, shall visit each school four times each year for the purpose of quarterly inspections, reviewing Building Fire Safety Plans and questioning the administrators. The Fire Department may also conduct a fire drill for your building if they feel your building is not in compliance with this law. Drills may be conducted without advance warning to the school personnel other than the person in charge of the school at the time.
- f. Fire drill plans must ensure adequate procedures for the emergency evacuation of students and staff with disabilities.

These procedures must also be incorporated in the School Safety/Contingency Plan for your school building. Fire drill procedures must address student and staff accountability in an evacuation. This element of the plan should identify the person(s) in charge, ensure accurate class attendance rosters are available, and identify specific locations for evacuees to assemble.

- g. As required by Massachusetts Law, 527 CMR 1.05, 20.2.4.2.1.6 Evacuation: Fire exit drills shall include the complete evacuation of all persons from the building.

STORAGE OF FLAMMABLES AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Flammables shall be stored in an approved locked metal cabinet suitably vented. If the amount being stored warrants, a locked storage vault should be provided. The storage facility must be under the control of a school official, with only the authorized personnel allowed access.

Faculty members should not allow students to fuel individual devices or transport any fuel container from one location to another.

All school personnel should be thoroughly instructed as to the hazard involved in a particular flammable liquid, chemical, or gas; and in its safe and proper handling prior to intended use. Material Safety Data sheets should be on file in the main office. No fuel container should be allowed to remain in any classroom but should be immediately returned to its permanent storage facility.

The above procedures should be incorporated in the School Safety/Contingency Plan for each school building. Materials used in school science laboratory experiments are to be stored in

compliance with related laws, codes, and ordinances. Quarterly school fire inspections are complemented by specialized inspections conducted by Boston Fire Department Special Occupancies' Officers.

*Hazardous storage areas must be secured and identified with the appropriate warning label. The appropriate chemical storage room door identification is the National Fire Protection Association's 704 Diamond.

**Reference Superintendent's Circular FSE-06 Student Safety / Health in School Shops, and / or Laboratories and Classrooms; and the chemical inventory sheet in Superintendent's Circular FMT-7 Right to Know Law.*

REPORTING OF FIRE INCIDENTS

The Boston Fire Prevention Code requires the following:

- a. Upon any person's discovery of a fire or smoke in a building or premises, they shall immediately notify the Fire Alarm Office of the Boston Fire Department of the location of the discovery and of the circumstances they have observed. The Boston Fire Department *must* be notified *both* by sounding the nearest fire alarm box (pull station) *and* by telephone (911 or 617-343-2880) in the event of a fire.
- b. Any discovery or evidence of a fire or attempt to burn shall be reported to the Boston Fire Department by calling either 911 or 617-343-2880 and the BPS Director of Emergency Management and Preparedness (857) 701-9404 to begin an arson investigation. BFD considers any fire started by a student as a potentially serious mental health issue that, if addressed early enough, may prevent more serious problems

in the future.

- c. This section shall not be construed to forbid any person who discovers a fire, or the owner, lessee, person in charge of the building or premises, any occupant, or any of their agents, after notifying the Fire Department, from using all means necessary to extinguish or control the fire prior to the arrival of the Fire Department.
- d. No person shall require, make, issue, post, or maintain any order, direction, or regulation, written or verbal, that would require or direct anyone to delay reporting a fire to the Fire Department.
- e. All personnel must be familiar with fire reporting procedures.
- f. The Boston Fire Department and then Facilities Management, The Office of Emergency Management and Preparedness are to be notified of all fire-related incidents. These include but are not limited to following:

Fire or explosion	Hazardous materials (i.e. fuel
Good intent calls	spills or chemical leaks)
Overpressure rupture	Hazardous conditions
False alarm/false call	Service calls
Medical emergency	Fire extinguished by occupant

- g. Any fire (including paper towels or tissues, even if extinguished), must be reported to the Boston Fire Department in accordance with procedure delineated in sections a. and b. above.
- h. The principal shall submit a written report available with this_link: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/fp-200-school-fire->

[reporting-form/download](#) of any fire within the school building or on the school grounds to [BPS Director of Emergency Management and Preparedness](#), (857) 701-9404 who will then forward it to the Boston Fire Department within 24 hours. This is in compliance with Mass General Law, Chapter 148, Sec. 2A, which went into effect September 2006.

This information is also essential for arson prevention action.

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS/KITCHEN SYSTEMS

- a. Portable fire extinguishers must be serviced annually and located in accordance with the building's Fire Safety Plan.
- b. Kitchen extinguishing systems must be serviced twice a year.
- c. It is the responsibility of senior custodians to ensure extinguishers are visually inspected weekly and recharged/inspected annually to ensure they are ready for emergency use.
- d. Requests for fire extinguisher servicing should be made to Facilities Management at 617-635-9122.
- e. If extinguishers are not hanging in corridors, they must be readily accessible. A list of fire extinguisher locations shall be posted in the office and maintained in the Fire Safety section of your building's School Safety/Contingency Plan.

FLAMMABLE DECORATIONS

- a. Flammable decorations, including examples of students' work, must not be displayed in paths of egress, including doorways and stairwells.
- b. The Boston Fire Department expects us to display reasonable amounts of student work. This is to be in accordance with the

National Fire Protection Association, Life Safety Code and 527 CMR 20.2.4.4.3:

"Paper materials displayed in educational use occupancies shall be permitted on walls only in accordance with the following: (1) In classrooms, paper materials displayed shall not exceed 20% of the total wall area. (2) Paper materials displayed shall be attached directly to the walls and shall not be permitted to cover an egress door or be placed within five feet of an egress door, unless approved by the AHJ. When determining wall areas, the door and window openings shall be included unless: (a) Paper materials are displayed in fully enclosed viewing cabinets with glass or polycarbonate viewing panels or covered with glass or polycarbonate sheet material in accordance with the Building Code; (b) Flame retardant paper material is used for display. (3) Paper material displays shall be permitted to cover up to 50% of the total wall area in classrooms that are fully sprinklered in accordance with Chapter 13.

Corridor displays and decorations are limited to bulletin boards and must not cover more than 10% of the total corridor wall space.

- c. Certain buildings have more fire protection features than others. This may be considered when displaying student work.
- d. Please refer to Superintendent's Circular FSE-03 Building Codes and Fire Regulations.

RIGHT TO KNOW – CHEMICAL INVENTORY

Each school / facility must maintain an accurate inventory of toxic and hazardous substances stored and used in the building. Please refer to Superintendent's Circular FMT-07 "Right to Know" Law – Chemical Inventory.

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT DATES AND DEADLINES

Date	Activity
September (First Week of School)	Quarterly Fire Drill Report Due
December	Quarterly Fire Drill Report Due
March	Quarterly Fire Drill Report Due
June	Quarterly Fire Drill Report Due

For more information about this circular, contact:

Owner:	Director of Emergency Management & Preparedness
Department:	<u>Office of Emergency Management, Safety Services</u>
Mailing Address:	205 Townsend Street Boston, MA 02121
Phone:	(617) 635-6082 or (857) 701-9404
Email:	<u>Operations-Department-Heads@bostonpublicschools.org</u>

Mary Skipper, Superintendent

(Updated 7.31.2024)

ATTACHMENT A
SCHOOL BUILDING FIRE SAFETY PLANS

School:

Principal/Head of School:

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1. Does school have a Fire Safety Plan as part of School Safety/Contingency Plan? | Y | N |
| 2. Is the plan readily available in the main office? | Y | N |
| 3. (School Safety/Contingency Plan, Section 6) | | |
| 4. Is the plan current for this school year? | Y | N |
| 5. Does plan include following elements: | | |
| a. Description of building (type, height, occupancy) | Y | N |
| b. Types of fire protection systems (sprinkler system, standpipes) | Y | N |
| c. Fire alarms (locations of pull stations, smoke detectors, heat detectors) | Y | N |
| d. Location of exits (primary and alternate) | Y | N |
| e. Evacuation routes (primary and alternate) | Y | N |
| f. Stairwell designations | Y | N |
| g. Smoke control (are corridor doors closed or held open by magnetic devices that release when an alarm is activated?) | Y | N |
| h. Location of extinguishers | Y | N |
| i. Identity and location of any occupants with disabilities | Y | N |
| j. Floor plans | Y | N |
| k. Record of staff training | Y | N |
| l. Fire drill reports | Y | N |
| m. Fire alarm system test records | Y | N |
| n. Copy of building occupancy permit | Y | N |
| o. Incident Control Team members identified by name and title with defined responsibilities in an emergency (including back-ups) | Y | N |
| <i>A follow-up phone call must always be made to the Fire Alarm Office (911 or 617-343-2880) by a designated staff member.</i> | | |
| p. AED device location: | Y | N |

Date: _____

ATTACHMENT B
BOSTON FIRE DEPARTMENT — FIRE PREVENTION DIVISION
SCHOOL DISPLAY MATERIALS: 527 CMR 1.05

AREA	WITH NO SPRINKLERS	WITH SPRINKLERS
Classroom	<p>20% wall coverage with combustible materials allowed.</p> <p>Nothing within 5ft. of the egress door.</p> <p>No limit if in viewing cabinet, covered with polycarbonate, or materials are flame retardant*</p>	<p>50% wall coverage with combustible materials allowed.</p> <p>Nothing within 5ft. of the egress door.</p> <p>No limit if in the viewing cabinet, covered with polycarbonate, or materials are flame retardant.*</p>
Exit passageway, corridors, and assembly area.	<p>10% wall coverage with combustible materials allowed.</p> <p>Each grouping to be maximum of 6 ft. high and 12 ft. wide.</p> <p>Groups to be separated by at least the width of the largest adjacent group.</p> <p>No limit if in the viewing cabinet, covered with Polycarbonate, or materials are flame retardant.</p> <p>No materials within 5ft. of egress door.</p>	<p>50% wall coverage with combustible materials allowed.</p> <p>Each grouping to be maximum of 6 ft. high and 12 ft. wide.</p> <p>Groups to be separated by at least ½ the width of the largest adjacent group.</p> <p>No limit if in the viewing cabinet, covered with Polycarbonate, or materials are flame retardant.</p> <p>No materials within 5ft. of egress door.</p>
Exits and enclosed stairs	Nothing permitted.	Nothing permitted.

NOTES:

- (1) Door and window openings are to be included when calculating wall areas.
- (2) Documentation must show compliance with NFPA 701 or CA 13115 to be flame retardant.
- (3) Plexiglas is not allowed; the covering must be glass or polycarbonate.
- (4) The posting of exit signage or evacuation plans shall not be prohibited by this regulation.
- (5) 527 CMR 1.05 shall not be applicable to any election materials required by law to be posted during any local, state, or federal election.

This regulation is effective September 19, 2003.