



# ABC's of **Fire Safety** for Schools



# INTRODUCTION

The ABC's of Fire Safety was developed as a quick reference guide for schools when addressing fire safety concerns. For further information or more detailed information, please review the Principal's Guide to the Fire Safety Binder.

For more detailed information consult The National Fire Code.



## Table of Contents

Administration - Fire Books.....	4
Fire Drills.....	4
CCRSB Fire Audit Process.....	4
After Hours Use of Facilities.....	4
Sleepovers in Schools.....	4
Reportable Fires.....	5
Placement of Room Evacuation Map.....	5
Areas of Refuge.....	5
Special Needs Areas (Sensory Rooms and Time Out Areas Included).....	5
20% Rule.....	6
Fabrics in the Classroom.....	6
Placement of Combustible Material.....	6
Student Artwork on Ceiling Tiles.....	6
Decorating for Holidays/Special Events.....	7
Furniture in School Settings.....	7
Hanging Material.....	7
Distance to Ceiling.....	7
Cooking in Classrooms/Using Electrical Appliances.....	7
Use of Extension Cords/Power Bars.....	8
Classroom Exit Door Clearances.....	8
Clearances for Fire Alarm Pull Stations/Electrical Panels and Fire Extinguishers.....	8
Stairwells.....	9
Locks on Doors.....	9
Fire Doors.....	9
Hallways.....	9
Outside Buildings or Container.....	9
Storage in Boiler, Electrical and Air Handling Rooms.....	9

## **Administration - Fire Books**

Staff training should occur each year and be documented in the Principals Guide Section 7A. Fire books must be re-viewed periodically, a minimum of every two months. Documentation not being maintained may be seized by the Fire Marshal's office and possibly subject to legal action.

## **Fire Drills**

There must be a minimum of six fire evacuation drills per school year. Three in the fall sessions and three in the spring. The first fire drill should be in the first week of school.

## **CCRSB Fire Audit Process**

CCRSB Fire Safety Technician will visit each school over the school year to assist with fire safety compliance. A report will be provided to each school identifying areas to be addressed by the school, Property Services and/or IT. The Safety Technician will coordinate work orders required for Property Services and/or IT.

## **After Hours Use of Facilities**

Non-school board staff using school facilities must be supplied information regarding the fire plan. See Principal's Guide.

## **Sleepovers in Schools**

Any sleepover at school facilities must have approval of the Fire Marshal. Two weeks notice is required by the Fire Marshal to facilitate site visit and/or review of plan. Please contact the Fire Safety Representative for the Board for more information.



## Reportable Fires

All fires, explosions or detection of smoke shall be reported immediately to 911 and the appropriate Board personnel. All fires shall be reported using the Board's regular reporting procedures to the Health and Safety Department via the Re-portable Occurrence form, as soon as reasonably possible.

## Placement of Room Evacuation Map

The fire evacuation map may be placed on either side of the door (primarily on the right hand side) and should be eye height for an adult. When the door is open, the map should be visible. The primary evacuation route must be marked in red ink and the secondary route must be in a green dotted line. The evacuation map must be orientated correctly to the layout of the building.

## Areas of Refuge

In multi-story schools areas of refuge must be identified for students or staff with physical limitations who are unable to use the stairs to exit the building in a safe and timely manner. The responding fire department must be aware of the location and the possibility of any staff and students in these areas where students and staff may safely wait for a specified time due to the fire rating of the doors and walls, often a landing in a stairwell.

## Special Needs Areas (Sensory Rooms and Time Out Areas Included)

Any area used for sensory time with special needs students shall comply with all fire regulations. All combustible equipment shall comply with the flame spread rating and all documentation must be kept at the school. This includes all mats, tents, blankets and any chairs made of combustible material etc., used in these rooms.



## 20% Rule

Combustible materials, such as student artwork, teaching aids attached to walls shall not be greater than 20% of the wall or surface area.

## Fabrics in the Classroom

Where fabric is being displayed or hung there is, including curtains, flags and banners, a requirement to verify it meets the combustibility/flammability requirements. This documentation must be maintained at the school. For details regarding these requirements, contact the Fire Safety Representative for the Board.

## Placement of Combustible Material

Teaching aids or decorative material shall not be attached to the door around, or on the door casing. Glass panels, in a classroom door, should not be covered unless it is for a temporary Lock-down situation or approved fire rated material is used.

Use of cloth in the classroom, as a backdrop to cover a bulletin board or other decorative material must be taken into account for the 20 percent. Display of student artwork and teaching materials shall not impair visibility or detract attention from fire safety equipment.

## Student Artwork on Ceiling Tiles

Ceiling tiles may be painted, if painting the tiles does not alter its fire rating. Also, water based paint must be used. The ceiling tile cannot be left vacant while students are painting as it may affect the fire separation the ceiling tile provides. Other safety hazards should not result from staff putting ceiling tiles in place, such as standing on tables or chairs.



## **Decorating for Holidays/Special Events**

All decorations and the placement of decorations must meet the 20 percent surface coverage as well as other fire and safety regulations.

## **Furniture in School Settings**

All purchased or donated new or used furniture, with upholstery, shall meet combustibility and flammability ratings. Documentation of flame spread rating must be available at the school. For details contact the Fire Safety Representative for the Board.

## **Hanging Material**

No material shall be attached to light fixtures, thermal or heat detectors, exit signs or fire sprinkler heads.

## **Distance to Ceiling**

Combustible/flammable material must be lower than 18 inches/45 centimetres from the sprinkler head. This includes any items on shelves and in storage areas. In an unsprinklered building this should be increased to 39 inches/one meter.

## **Cooking in Classrooms/Using Electrical Appliances**

Cooking in the classroom is prohibited unless the classroom was designed for that purpose, i.e. Family Studies. This includes coffee makers, microwaves, tea kettles and toasters.

## Use of Extension Cords/Power Bars

Extension cords **may not** be used as a permanent source of power. Power bars are permitted but cannot be plugged in to one another. Caution must be taken to ensure that the use of the power bars or extension cords do not cause additional safety issues, such as trip hazards.

Extension cords shall be plugged directly into a wall outlet. Extension cords shall be maintained in good condition with-out splices, deterioration or damage.

Extension cords shall not be affixed to structures; extend through walls, ceilings, floors, under doors or floor coverings; or be subject to environmental or physical damage. Power bars shall not be plugged into extension cords. If power bars are to be used they must be plugged directly in the wall outlet. All extension cords and power bars must be ULC and/or CSA approved.

## Classroom Exit Door Clearances

All exit doors in a classroom, whether to the outside of the school building or into a corridor/hallway must be kept free and clear of all obstructions to allow the door to open fully. These should be areas where students and staff may safely wait for a specified time due to the fire rating of the doors and walls, often a landing in a stairwell.

## Clearances for Fire Alarm Pull Stations/ Electrical Panels and Fire Extinguishers

Fire alarm pull stations and fire exits must be visible and easily accessible. Electrical panels must be easily accessible with a clearance of one meter/91 centimetres shall be maintained at all times.





## **Stairwells**

Stairwells are access to exits and shall be maintained free and clear of all storage. Combustible materials shall not be stored or posted in any stairwell.

## **Locks on Doors**

Chains or sliding barrel bolts are not permitted on any doors as it may prohibit safe evacuations.

## **Fire Doors**

Fire doors should not be held open by any device other than appropriate door hardware. Door stops, wedges (of any material) or any other item used to hold open fire doors are prohibited.

## **Hallways**

Hallways, including fire doors must be kept free at all times, in case of an emergency.

## **Outside Buildings or Container**

All outside buildings or containers must be a minimum of 3 meters/10 feet from the school. All buildings shall meet building code requirements. Refer to Property Services to verify any specific requirements for school grounds and/or buildings.

## **Storage in Boiler, Electrical and Air Handling Rooms**

There shall be no storage in boiler, electrical or air handling rooms unless it is directly related to the operation of the equipment in those rooms.



# References

For more information or clarification on any questions please contact:

## CCRSB Health and Safety

- **Jackie Fahey**, Coordinator of Health & Safety 902-897-8941  
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- **Alex Manicom**, Safety Manager 902- 896-5599  
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## For more information:

### Nova Scotia Fire Safety Program

- Principal's Guide
- Fire Safety Systems Maintenance Log
- Fire Safety Systems Maintenance Information

### Fire Marshall's Office

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/lwd/publicsafety/ofm.asp>

### Fire Safety Act

<http://nslegislature.ca/legc/statutes/firesafe.htm>





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