

Procedure Title	<b>Decorations, Furnishings, and Appliances in the Workplace</b>		
Date of Issue	March 4, 2020	Related Policy	<a href="#">BP 3801-D</a>
Revision Dates	September 28, 2022; July 5, 2023; January 17, 2024	Related Forms	
Review Date		Originator	Administrative Council
<b>References</b>			
AP 3801-D "Occupational Health and Safety Program"; Fire Code, O. Reg. 213-07; CAN/ULC-S109 "Flame Tests of Flame-Resistant Fabrics Films"; Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA); "ABC's of Fire Safety for Schools", Chignecto-Central Regional Centre of Education; "Fire Safety Guide", Manitoba School Boards Association; Ontario School Board's Insurance Exchange, OSBIE Blogs			

## 1.0 RATIONALE

- 1.1 The safety and well-being of our staff and students is a top priority for Bluewater District School Board (BWDSB). By outlining acceptable use of decorative materials and furnishings in the workplace, BWDSB endeavours to achieve a balance between visually enriched, comfortable environments, and maintaining an acceptable level of safety within the workplace. Some furnishings (such as couches, desks, chairs, bookshelves, etc.) add to the combustible load in the rooms. The additional furnishings may obstruct the proper cleaning of the rooms and the egress for fire exiting. Furnishings may also harbour airborne allergens (mould), insects (bed bugs, lice, etc.), and rodents.

## 2.0 DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 **Appliances**  
Appliances include, but are not limited to, space heaters, microwave ovens, toasters, ovens, kettles, coffee makers, toaster ovens, fridges, water coolers, and hot plates.
- 2.2 **Combustible materials**  
Combustible materials are those materials that can catch fire and burn easily.
- 2.3 **Decorative materials**  
Decorative materials are anything applied over the existing wall or ceiling finishes, including, but not limited to bulletin boards to posters, banners, maps, photographs, door décor, holiday lights, fake plants, ornaments, and artwork.
- 2.4 **Home furnishings**  
Home furnishings are donated items and items otherwise sourced from outside normal purchasing processes, including, but not limited to, area rugs, shelving units, filing cabinets, chairs, couches, lamps, televisions etc.
- 2.5 **Personal belongings**  
Personal belongings include decorative materials, as defined above, and personal-use items like clothing, footwear, kitchenware, etc. It does not include items purchased to support curriculum including pens, paper, books, markers etc.

## 3.0 PROCEDURE

### 3.1 Duties and Responsibilities

- 3.1.1 The administrator/supervisor shall:
- ensure all staff and the Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) are familiar with this procedure;

- ii. ensure all furnishings meet the requirements of institutional or commercial use;
- iii. ensure all furnishings are purchased with a purchase order from a pre-approved vendor;
- iv. ensure no home furnishings are brought into the workplace;
- v. ensure staff remove all decorations and personal belongings from the workplace prior to the summer break. Ensure surfaces, pathways, and floors are clear; and
- vi. contact the applicable fire department to request approval for special events and temporary seasonal decorations (e.g., classroom/department door decorating contests).

**3.1.2 Employees shall:**

- i. be familiar with the requirements of the procedure;
- ii. work with the administrator/manager/supervisor prior to making any decisions to furnish the classroom/office;
- iii. ensure no home furnishings are brought into the workplace; and
- iv. remove all decorative materials and personal belongings from the workplace prior to the summer break. Ensure surfaces, pathways, and floors are clear.

**3.2 Subject Specific Procedures****3.2.1 Combustible Materials**

- i. In accordance with Section 2.10.2.1 of the Ontario Fire Code, combustible artwork, decorative materials, and teaching materials that are attached to walls shall not exceed 20% of the area of the walls. To meet this requirement, bulletin boards:
  - a) must be utilized in hallways;
  - b) should be utilized, where possible, in classrooms.
- ii. Areas around doors and windows must not be used for posting combustible materials.
- iii. Walls must not be covered with plastic, paper, carpet etc.
- iv. Combustible or decorative materials must not be posted on univents, cabinet heaters, radiators, and/or electrical panels.

**3.2.2 Fabrics**

- i. Drapes, curtains, netting, bean bag chairs, tents, canopies, and other similar or decorative materials, including textiles and films shall meet the requirements of CAN/ULC-S109, "Flame Tests of Flame-Resistant Fabrics and Films" when used in any hallway or exit; or with assembly occupancies with an occupant load of more than 100 person (thus, any workplace with more than 100 occupants in the building at one time).

**3.2.3 Area Carpet**

- i. Only area carpets purchased with a purchase order and through a pre-approved vendor will be permitted in the workplace.
- ii. Area carpets are only permitted in libraries, kindergarten to Grade 3 and special education classrooms.
- iii. Ceremonial carpets may be approved on a case-by-case basis, through consultation with the health and safety officer.
- iv. All carpets must have the Carpet and Rug Institute (CRI) Green Label Plus certification.
- v. All carpets must have a non-slip backing to them and be in good condition.
- vi. All carpets must be bordered on all four sides.
- vii. Area carpets are not to be taped to the floor.
- viii. Tape or other adhesive products are not to be added to the surface of the carpet.
- ix. Carpets must be heavy enough to permit effective vacuuming and shampooing.
- x. Plant Operations Department or the health and safety officer reserve the right to remove any carpet that is deemed unsafe or may potentially have a negative impact in the workplace.

**3.2.4 Furnishings**

- i. All furnishings must not negatively affect the health of occupants (e.g., allergens, dust mites, etc.).
- ii. All items must have a non-porous, wipeable surface to allow for appropriate cleaning.
- iii. All furnishings must not impede fire routes or increase the potential for trips and falls.

- iv. All shelving units over four (4) feet tall must be securely anchored to a wall.
- v. Board procedures, standards, and budget allocations for the procurement of furnishings must be followed at all times.

**3.2.5 Small Appliances and Lamps**

- i. Only small appliances and lamps purchased with a purchase order through a pre-approved vendor will be permitted in the workplace.
- ii. All appliances and lamps must be plugged directly into wall outlets. Use of extension cords and power bars for this purpose is not allowed.
- iii. Unless the classroom is specifically designed for cooking, cooking in the classroom is prohibited. This includes the use of coffee makers, microwaves, (tea) kettles, and toasters.
- iv. Lamps should be permanently mounted or used where they cannot be knocked over.
- v. Only LED bulbs are to be used in decorative/task lamps.
- vi. The bulb protector and/or shade must be non-combustible.
- vii. Floor lamps are not permitted.
- viii. Shade covers on ceiling lights that are purchased from a board-approved vendor and meet the CAN/ULC-S109, are acceptable.

**3.2.6 Hanging Material**

- i. Material must not be attached to light fixtures, thermal or heat detectors, exit signs, ceiling tiles/ceiling grid, or fire sprinkler heads.

**3.2.7 Clearance to Sprinkler Heads**

- i. In a workplace that has a sprinkler system, materials must be stored no closer than 46 centimeters (18 inches) from a sprinkler head, including any items on shelves and in storage areas.

**3.2.8 Use of Extension Cords/Power Bars**

- i. Extension cords must not be used as a permanent source of power.
- ii. Extension cords must be maintained in good condition without splices, deterioration, or damage.
- iii. Extension cords must be plugged directly into a wall outlet.
- iv. Extension cords must not be affixed to structures; extend through walls, ceilings, floors, under doors or floor coverings; or be subject to environmental or physical damage.
- v. Power bars are permitted but cannot be plugged in to one another.
- vi. Power bars must not be plugged into extension cords.
- vii. If power bars are to be used, they must be plugged directly in the wall outlet.
- viii. All extension cords and power bars must be ULC and/or CSA approved.
- ix. 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.

**3.2.9 Stairwells and Exits**

- i. Stairwells and exits must be kept clear of obstructions and combustible materials.

**3.2.10 Housekeeping**

- i. Flammable and combustible materials must be stored in appropriate rooms.
- ii. Cleaning materials and other combustibles must not be stored in furnace, mechanical or electrical rooms.
- iii. No more than five (5) litres of flammable gas can be stored in a regular storage room and no more than 10 litres in an auto shop. All must be stored in an approved safety container.
- iv. Propane must not be stored inside workplace buildings and must be secured in a proper caged storage location.
- v. Clutter must be kept to a minimum and is restricted to items of educational value and usefulness.

**3.2.11 Removal of Unapproved Items**

- i. Any items found on site that are not approved for use, or do not meet the guidelines of this procedure, will be identified and the employee will be notified to remove the items as soon as possible.
- ii. Unapproved items that remain on site, following notification, will be removed by board personnel unless alternative arrangements have been made with the administrator.
- iii. The board will not be held responsible for replacement of items (or their monetary value) disposed of due to non-compliance with this procedure.