



FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU STANDARD

School Fire Inspection Checklist

10/21/2025

PURPOSE

This Information Bulletin is a summary of Fire Department interpretations of City and State Codes. Information contained herein applies to typical instances and may not address all individual circumstances. This Information Bulletin is being provided in order to establish clear policy with respect to the requirements of the 2022 California Fire Code as they relate Schools (E Occupancies).

CODE REFERENCES

2022 California Fire and Building Code as adopted and amended by the Sonoma Valley Fire District, The City of Sonoma, and Sonoma County.

BACKGROUND

A pre-inspection serves as a proactive measure to ensure that school facilities are safe, compliant, and fully prepared for the annual fire inspection conducted by the local fire authority. Educational occupancies (Group E) present unique life safety challenges due to the age and number of occupants, the need for rapid evacuation, and the presence of specialized spaces such as laboratories, kitchens, and multipurpose rooms.

By completing a pre-inspection, school administrators and maintenance staff can identify and correct deficiencies before they become violations or hazards. This process supports compliance with the California Fire Code, helps maintain uninterrupted operations, and reinforces a culture of safety among faculty and students.

Pre-inspections also improve efficiency during the formal inspection, minimize corrective enforcement actions, and demonstrate the school's commitment to providing a safe learning environment. In addition, early identification of issues such as blocked exits, expired extinguisher tags, or non-functioning alarm systems reduces risk to life and property and ensures that emergency systems function as intended during an incident.



FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU STANDARD

School Fire Inspection Checklist

10/21/2025

School Fire & Life Safety Pre-Inspection Checklist

1. Exits and Egress

Code Reference: CFC §§1001–1031

- ☐ All exit doors open easily from the inside without keys, tools, or special knowledge. ([See SVFD Standard](#))
- ☐ No latches, dead bolts, security devices or other items that restrict the classroom door from opening without special knowledge or effort.
- ☐ Exit doors, corridors, and aisles are clear of obstructions and storage.
- ☐ Exit signs are illuminated and visible (CFC §1013).
- ☐ Emergency lighting functions properly during power outage test (CFC §1008).
- ☐ Secondary exits from classrooms and multipurpose rooms are accessible and not blocked.
- ☐ Exit pathways maintained at least 44" wide (minimum per occupancy load).

2. Fire Extinguishers

Code Reference: CFC §§906, 906.3

- ☐ Minimum 2A:10BC extinguishers present and mounted with top not greater than 5' above floor. There shall be a fire extinguisher within 75 feet of all areas within an occupied space or area.
- ☐ Extinguishers inspected monthly (tag initialed) and serviced annually by a licensed contractor.
- ☐ Clear access to each extinguisher, the extinguisher is visible (no storage or furniture in front).



Sonoma Valley Fire District

630 Second Street West, Sonoma CA 95476 - 707-996-2102

FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU STANDARD

School Fire Inspection Checklist

10/21/2025

3. Fire Alarm & Detection Systems

Code Reference: CFC §§907, 907.8

- ☐ Fire alarm system functional, with annual inspection tag from a licensed contractor.
- ☐ No devices obstructed (smoke detectors, pull stations, horns/strobes).
- ☐ Staff trained on alarm activation, evacuation, and reset procedures.
- ☐ Fire alarm panel free of trouble or supervisory signals.
- ☐ Room or area containing the Fire Alarm Control Panel is clearly labeled. ([See Standard on Fire Labeling and Signage](#))

4. Automatic Fire Sprinkler Systems (if equipped)

Code Reference: CFC §§903, 904

- ☐ Annual inspection/service completed and documented (tag current).
- ☐ Five year inspection/service completed and documented (tag current).
- ☐ No storage within 18" of sprinkler deflectors.
- ☐ Sprinkler heads free of paint, corrosion, dust, or mechanical damage.
- ☐ Control valves accessible and in the open position.
- ☐ Fire Department Connection (outside) shall be unobstructed and labeled with each building served. ([See Standard on Fire Labeling and Signage](#))
- ☐ Room or area containing fire sprinkler system risers or controls are clearly labeled. ([See Standard on Fire Labeling and Signage](#))



Sonoma Valley Fire District

630 Second Street West, Sonoma CA 95476 - 707-996-2102

FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU STANDARD

School Fire Inspection Checklist

10/21/2025

5. Electrical Safety

Code Reference: CFC §§605, 604

- ☐ No use of extension cords as permanent wiring.
- ☐ Power strips have circuit breakers and plug directly into wall outlets. Power strip cords used in areas with foot traffic must be protected.
- ☐ Electrical panels accessible with 30" clearance.
- ☐ No daisy-chaining of cords or adapters.
- ☐ All light fixtures, outlets, and switches in good repair with covers installed.

6. Heating, Ventilation, and Appliances

Code Reference: CFC §§603, 609

- ☐ Portable space heaters are prohibited unless permanently installed and UL-listed with tip-over protection.
- ☐ Mechanical rooms are not used for storage.
- ☐ Combustible materials kept at least 36" from heaters and electrical panels.



Sonoma Valley Fire District

630 Second Street West, Sonoma CA 95476 - 707-996-2102

FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU STANDARD

School Fire Inspection Checklist

10/21/2025

7. Housekeeping & Storage

Code Reference: CFC §§315, 320

- ☐ Combustible storage kept orderly and away from exits, heaters, and electrical equipment.
- ☐ Storage shall be maintained 2 feet or more below the ceiling in areas with no fire sprinklers, and 18 inches from the bottom of the fire sprinkler head in areas where fire sprinklers are present.
- ☐ Ceilings and walls free from excessive paper decorations (limit 20% of wall area unless fully sprinklered per §807.5.2.3). See explanatory section within this document.
- ☐ Storage in corridors, under stairs, or mechanical rooms prohibited.
- ☐ Waste containers metal or self-closing in janitorial areas.

8. Hazardous Materials (Science, Custodial, Shop Areas)

Code Reference: CFC Ch. 50–57

- ☐ All chemicals labeled and properly stored per hazard class.
- ☐ Flammable liquids stored in approved flammable liquid cabinets.
- ☐ Safety Data Sheets (SDS) available on site.
- ☐ Eye wash stations tested weekly (documented).



FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU STANDARD	
School Fire Inspection Checklist	10/21/2025

9. Fire Department Access

Code Reference: CFC §§503, 506

- ☐ Fire lanes marked and kept clear (20 feet and unobstructed / red curb or signage).
- ☐ Address numbers visible from the street (12" numbers, contrasting color).
- ☐ Fire hydrants accessible and not blocked by vehicles, fences, or landscaping.
- ☐ Access (KNOX control or KNOX padlock) provided for exterior gates & are locks in working condition?
- ☐ Fire department key box (Knox Box) installed and contains current keys.

10. Emergency Preparedness

Code Reference: CFC §§403, 404

- ☐ Current emergency evacuation plans posted in each classroom and office.
- ☐ Fire drills conducted monthly (elementary) or quarterly (secondary) and documented.
- ☐ Staff trained on evacuation, assembly areas, and special needs procedures.
- ☐ Alarm audibility verified in all areas.



FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU STANDARD	
School Fire Inspection Checklist	10/21/2025

11. Special Areas & Activities

Code Reference: CFC Ch. 3, 4, 10

- ☐ Theaters, gyms, and assembly areas maintain 44" aisles and open exits.
- ☐ Stage and sound curtains are flame retardant and tagged within 5 years (§807.4.3).
- ☐ Decorations and holiday displays are flame-resistant.
- ☐ Kitchen hood suppression systems inspected and tagged semi-annually (every six months).
- ☐ Kitchen hoods been cleaned recently & are they free of grease accumulation?

12. Documentation on Site

- ☐ Annual service tags for alarm, sprinkler, and hood systems.
- ☐ Fire drill records (current school year).
- ☐ MSDS/SDS binders for chemicals.
- ☐ Evacuation maps posted and current.



FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU STANDARD

School Fire Inspection Checklist

10/21/2025

12. Classroom and Door Decorations

Decorations in Classrooms

Decorations, artwork, and teaching materials are an important part of the learning environment, but they can also increase fire load and contribute to rapid flame spread if not properly controlled. The California Fire Code limits the amount, type, and placement of combustible decorative materials in educational occupancies to protect students and staff.

Key Requirements:

- Combustible Wall Coverings (CFC §807.5.2.3):
In non-sprinklered classrooms, combustible decorations such as paper, fabric, or artwork may cover no more than 20% of the total wall area.
In fully sprinklered buildings, the limit increases to 50% of the wall area.
- Ceiling Decorations:
Hanging or attached combustible materials are not permitted on ceilings unless they are part of an approved display and do not obstruct sprinklers, lights, or smoke detectors.
- Material Flame Resistance (CFC §807.4):
Decorative materials must be flame resistant or treated with an approved fire-retardant. Materials that have been treated should be labeled or certified by the manufacturer.
- Storage and Clustering:
Decorations must not accumulate in corners, along exit routes, or near doors where fire growth could block egress.
- Illumination and Equipment:
No decorations may be attached to or cover light fixtures, electrical outlets, or fire safety devices such as sprinklers, detectors, or alarm strobes.



FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU STANDARD

School Fire Inspection Checklist

10/21/2025

Decorating Exit Doors / Classroom Doors

Exit doors and exit access corridors are critical life safety components, and the CFC is very clear that they must remain recognizable and immediately usable in an emergency.

Restrictions:

- Obstruction or Concealment (CFC §1031.2):
Exit doors must be readily distinguishable and **free of decorations or coverings that obscure their purpose or hinder operation.**
Covering an exit door with paper, fabric, or posters is not permitted, even for short-term events.
- Vision Panels and Hardware:
Decorations must never cover or block vision panels, door hardware, or panic bars.
- Exit Signs and Lighting:
Exit signage and emergency lighting near the door must remain visible at all times.
Decorations that reduce visibility of exit signage are prohibited.

Limited Allowances:

Seasonal or temporary displays may be placed near exits only if:

1. The display does not reduce the door's visibility or accessibility.
2. The material is flame resistant.
3. The display can be easily removed and does not obstruct any hardware or signage.



Sonoma Valley Fire District
630 Second Street West, Sonoma CA 95476 - 707-996-2102

FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU STANDARD	
School Fire Inspection Checklist	10/21/2025

Best Practice Recommendations for Schools

- Keep all exit doors, corridors, and adjacent walls free of decorations.
- Post reminders in each classroom at the start of the school year regarding the 20% (or 50%) wall limit.
- Consider using noncombustible displays such as metal, glass, or framed boards when possible.
- Inspect regularly during holidays and special events to ensure compliance.



FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU STANDARD

School Fire Inspection Checklist

10/21/2025

Classrooms



ACCEPTABLE



NOT ACCEPTABLE

