



## DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

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August 10, 2020

To: Local Fire Marshals

From: Office of State Fire Marshal

Subject: School Reopening during Pandemic

Schools have been coming up with new and creative ways to keep the students socially distanced as a result of the pandemic and still maintain in-building instruction. It has come to our attention that various items are being built for that purpose, corridors and stairways being marked for one-way travel, and a variety of alternating schedules to limit the number of students in the building at any one time to name a few.

Some of the construction items we have become aware of that are being built to achieve social distancing are floor and tabletop dividers constructed of wood frames with plastic/polycarbonate (plexiglass/lexan). Polycarbonate (plexiglass/lexan) being suspended from the ceiling grid with chain. The items being hung from the ceiling should be a minimum of 18" down from the ceiling to assure proper air flow and so as not to affect automatic fire detection systems or to prevent a sprinkler obstruction or delay in operation. Since most of these measures are not a permanent part of the building construction, we would consider these fixtures or furnishings for the Fire Code and the Fire Prevention Code purposes. Additionally, since most of these features are of an 'operational' nature rather than permanent construction the Fire Prevention Code would be the more appropriate document, specifically Chapters 10 for General Fire Safety and 20.2 for Educational Occupancy fire safety.

For the dividers, these items would not be considered an interior finish as they typically are not attached directly to a wall surface. If one looks at the Fire Prevention Code section 20.2.3.2 (4) we can see the code does have a finish requirement for low height partitions less than 60 inches in height, since these dividers are not permanently installed nor have building utilities (electric) running through them we are not considering these as a permanent partition regulated by the CSFPC section 20.2.3.2. With the fixtures not regulated by the Educational Chapter in our Fire and Fire Prevention Codes, this again would require that judgement would have to be applied to any arrangement being proposed. No code modifications will be issued for these as we are viewing them as a temporary situation and not a permanent part of the building structure, additionally, no plastic/combustible items are allowed in the exit stair enclosures.

As a reminder CSFPC section 20.2.4 requires that schools have an emergency action plan and that this plan be updated to reflect revised building conditions/configurations. With those school buildings

indicating one-way corridors and stairs, fire drills are especially important, in the event of an actual emergency, the evacuation plan must be followed.

When these are installed by your school system it is the recommendation of the State Fire Marshals' Office that they be placed where they cannot obstruct egress or compromise fire alarm detection and notification systems as well as fire protection systems.

REGARDS,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "William E. Abbott". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "W" and "A".

William E. Abbott  
State Fire Marshal