



South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation
Division of Fire and Life Safety
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School Safety Considerations in Response to COVID-19

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, schools are challenged to find ways to return to the classroom while observing social distancing and increased sanitation requirements. State Fire provides the following guidance to school administrators to assist in providing a safe school environment when students return for classroom instruction.

Fire Drills:

- In South Carolina, there are an average of 100 fires each year in schools. When classes resume, there will be new students and new teachers in every school. Teachers and students will have been absent from school for an extended period of time. For these reasons, conducting fire drills in accordance with South Carolina laws and regulations is as important as ever.
- South Carolina Code of Law Section 59-63-910 requires schools to perform fire drills, active shooter/intruder drills, and severe weather/earthquake drills each semester.
- The South Carolina Fire Code requires fire drills be conducted monthly, that they include all building occupants, and the first drill be conducted within the first 10 days of the beginning of classes:

2018 SCFC 405.2 Frequency. Required emergency evacuation drills for educational occupancies shall be held monthly or more frequently where necessary to familiarize all occupants with the drill procedure.

2018 SCFC 403.5.1 First emergency evacuation drill. The first emergency evacuation drill of each school year shall be conducted within 10 days of the beginning of classes.

2018 SCFC 403.5.2 Time of day. Emergency evacuation drills shall be conducted at different hours of the day or evening, during the changing of classes, when the school is at assembly, during the recess or gymnastic periods, or during other times to avoid distinction between drills and actual fires.

2018 SCFC 403.5.3 Assembly points. Outdoor assembly areas shall be designated and shall be located a safe distance from the building being evacuated so as to avoid interference with fire department operations. The assembly areas shall be arranged to keep each class separate to provide accountability of all individuals.

- To promote social distancing during fire drills, State Fire recommends that school officials be creative in how they perform the drills. For example, not every classroom must perform the fire drill at the same time. Classes may stagger their evacuation DURING THE DRILL ONLY so as to minimize the number of students congregating in the hallway and outside assembly areas. Students may be asked to space apart during the fire drill.

- At the beginning of a drill, an announcement may be made by school administrators to distinguish the drill from an actual fire alarm activation. Other instructions regarding social distancing practices during the drill may be given.
- In the event of an unplanned fire alarm, all building occupants must evacuate immediately. Social distancing requirements do not apply to normal fire alarm activations.

Alcohol-Based Hand Sanitizers:

- Alcohol-Based Hand Sanitizer is a Category 3/Class I-C Flammable Liquid.
- Applying the South Carolina Fire Codes for maximum quantities of storage and use in Educational Occupancies depends on the construction factors of each building such as fire rated walls and fire sprinklers. The following guidance is intended to establish a minimum level of safety for all buildings, generally. Use of flammable liquids in excess of these quantities will require a code analysis of specific building conditions conducted by a South Carolina Licensed Architect or Engineer.
- The South Carolina Fire Code limits the maximum amount of Class I-C flammable liquids stored in educational occupancies to 120 gallons in non-sprinklered buildings and 240 gallons in sprinklered buildings (2018 SCFC Table 5003.1.1).
- The South Carolina Fire Code limits the maximum amount of Class 1-C flammable liquids in use in educational occupancies to 30 gallons in non-sprinklered buildings or 60 gallons in sprinklered buildings (2018 SCFC Table 5003.1.1).
 - The maximum capacity of each dispenser shall be 68 ounces (2 L).
 - The minimum separation between dispensers shall be 48 inches (1219 mm).
 - Portable containers of alcohol-based hand sanitizer must be kept at least 3 feet away from ignition sources (open flames, kitchen appliances, heating equipment, electrical equipment, and electrical outlets).
 - Dispensers shall not release their contents except when the dispenser is manually activated.
 - Portable dispensers shall not be placed in corridors.
 - The installation of wall mounted or permanent dispensers shall comply with section 5705.5 of the 2018 South Carolina Fire Code. Please consult a local fire marshal or the Office of State Fire Marshal for assistance in achieving compliance with South Carolina Fire Codes.

South Carolina State Fire exists as a focal point for service and support to save lives and property. This guidance is intended to assist school administrators in providing a fire safe and healthy school environment. It is not an all-encompassing list of code requirements, and following these guidelines does not guarantee compliance with all laws, regulations, and local ordinances. We remind school officials that you are subject to the inspections and enforcement orders of local fire marshals as well as the Office of State Fire Marshal and Department of Education's Office of School Facilities. Please reach out to your local fire department or our office if you have any questions.

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