



A publication of Fairfax County, Virginia



Fire Marshal's Office

Fire Inspections Branch

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CODE COMPLIANCE GUIDELINE

OPEN-FLAME DECORATIVE DEVICES

CANDLES, OIL LAMPS, DECORATIVE TORCHES & GAS LIGHTS

SCOPE

This publication outlines the prohibitions and fire safety requirements for the use of open-flame decorative devices within Fairfax County and the Towns of Clifton, Herndon, and Vienna. This publication does not address open-flame cooking devices, outdoor solid fuel burning devices, flaming food and beverage preparation, or open-flame torches used for removing paint.

OVERVIEW

This publication provides information which can help prevent unwanted fires resulting from the use of open-flame decorative devices such as candles, oil lamps, decorative torches, and other open-flame-producing decorative devices. More specifically, fire prevention regulations limiting or prohibiting the use of these open-flame decorative devices in assembly and educational occupancies, residential dormitories, public gatherings, ceremonies, and theatrical performances, are provided. Fire safety requirements and general precautions related to the use of these devices, as well as candle safety tips, are also provided.

Questions about the content of this publication should be directed to the Fire Inspections Branch at **703-246-4849**, during normal business hours, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

In accordance with Section 308.3 of the Fire Prevention Code, a person shall not utilize or allow to be utilized, an open-flame in connection with a public meeting or gathering for purposes of deliberation, worship, entertainment, amusement, instruction, education, recreation, awaiting transportation or similar purpose in Group A or E occupancies without first obtaining a Fire Prevention Code Permit (FPCP). There are two FPCP: One-Time Use and Continued Use.

One-Time Use. A one-time FPCP is required for each event for the use of open-flame in connection with a public meeting or gathering inside a building, space, or structure including temporary tents and theatrical performances. For theatrical performances, the term "each event" may apply to an ongoing production where the open-flame device and the manner in which it is used does not deviate from the original conditions of approval.

FPCP Type: F3FLM2

The permit fee is \$65

Continued Use. An FPCP is required for the continued use of open-flame decorative devices in restaurants, drinking establishments, assembly halls, and dining areas. This permit may be renewed annually.

FPCP Type: F3FLM1

The permit fee is \$125

PROHIBITED USE OF OPEN-FLAME

Locations Near Combustibles. In accordance with Section 308.3.3 of the Fire Prevention Code, open flames such as from candles, lanterns, kerosene heaters, and gas-fired heaters shall not be located on or near decorative material or similar combustible materials.

Aisles & Exits. In accordance with Section 308.3.4 of the Fire Prevention Code, candles shall be prohibited in areas where occupants stand, or in an aisle or exit.

Assembly Occupancies. In accordance with Section 308.3.7 of the Fire Prevention Code, open-flame devices shall not be used in assembly occupancies (Group A) except as follows:

1. Open-flame devices are allowed to be used in the following situations, provided approved precautions are taken to prevent ignition of a combustible material or injury to occupants:
 - 1.1. Where necessary for ceremonial or religious purposes in accordance with 308.3.5.
 - 1.2. On platforms/stages as a necessary part of a performance in accordance with 308.3.6.
 - 1.3. Where candles on tables are securely supported on substantial noncombustible bases and the candle flames are protected.
2. Heat-producing equipment complying with Chapter 6 of the Fire Prevention Code and the *International Mechanical Code (IMC)*.
3. Gas lights are allowed to be used provided adequate precautions satisfactory to the fire code official are taken to prevent ignition of combustible materials.

Dormitories. In accordance with Section 308.3.8 of the Fire Prevention Code, candles, incense and similar open-flame-producing items shall not be allowed in sleeping units in Group R-2 dormitory occupancies.

Passing of Hand-Held Candles. In accordance with Section 308.3.5 of the Fire Prevention Code, hand-held candles shall not be passed from one person to another while lighted during ceremonies or public gatherings.

Hazardous Locations. In accordance with Section 308.2 of the Fire Prevention Code, a person shall not take or utilize an open flame or light in a structure, vessel, boat or other place where highly flammable, combustible or explosive material is utilized or stored. Lighting appliances shall be well-secured in a glass globe and wire mesh cage or a similar approved device.

Throwing or Placing Sources of Ignition. In accordance with Section 308.2.1 of the Fire Prevention Code, no person shall throw or place, or cause to be thrown or placed, a lighted match, cigar, cigarette, matches, or other flaming or glowing substance or object on any surface or article where it can cause an unwanted fire.

Endangering Persons or Property. In accordance with Section 307 of the Fire Prevention Code, as amended by Fairfax County, no person shall kindle, authorize to be kindled, or maintain any permitted fire in such a manner that will endanger the property of another. Furthermore, if any person shall carelessly or negligently set fire to, burn or cause to be burned any property, either real or personal, whether the property be his or that of another, he shall be subject to the penalties set forth in Section 62-1-1 of the Fairfax County Code.

Candles, oil lamps, decorative torches, and other open-flame-producing decorative devices used in a hazardous manner contrary to manufactures' instructions and limitations for proper/safe operation may violate the Fire Prevention Code.

FIRE SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

Open-Flame Decorative Devices. In accordance with Section 308.3.2 of the Fire Prevention Code, open-flame decorative devices shall comply with all of the following restrictions:

1. Class I and Class II liquids and LP-gas shall not be used.
2. Liquid- or solid-fueled lighting devices containing more than 8 ounces (237 ml) of fuel must self-extinguish and not leak fuel at a rate of more than 0.25 teaspoon per minute (1.26 ml per minute) if tipped over.
3. The device or holder shall be constructed to prevent the spillage of liquid fuel or wax at the rate of more than 0.25 teaspoon per minute (1.26 ml per minute) when the device or holder is not in an upright position.
4. The device or holder shall be designed so that it will return to the upright position after being tilted to an angle of 45 degrees from vertical. *Exception:* Devices that self-extinguish if tipped over and do not spill fuel or wax at the rate of more than 0.25 teaspoon per minute (1.26 ml per minute) if tipped over.
5. The flame shall be enclosed except where openings on the side are not more than 0.375 inch (9.5 mm) diameter or where openings are on the top and the distance to the top is such that a piece of tissue paper placed on the top will not ignite in 10 seconds.
6. Chimneys shall be made of noncombustible materials and securely attached to the open-flame device. *Exception:* A chimney is not required to be attached to any open-flame device that will self-extinguish if the device is tipped over.
7. Fuel canisters shall be safely sealed for storage.
8. Storage and handling of combustible liquids shall be in accordance with Chapter 34.
9. Shades, where used, shall be made of noncombustible materials and securely attached to the open-flame device holder or chimney.
10. Candelabras with flame-lighted candles shall be securely fastened in place to prevent overturning, and shall be located away from occupants using the area and away from possible contact with drapes, curtains or other combustibles.

Religious Ceremonies. In accordance with Section 308.3.5 of the Fire Prevention Code, when, in the opinion of the fire code official, adequate safeguards have been taken, participants in religious ceremonies are allowed to carry hand-held candles. Hand-held candles shall not be passed from one person to another while lighted.

Theatrical Performances. In accordance with Section 308.3.6 of the Fire Prevention Code, where approved, open-flame devices used in conjunction with theatrical performances are allowed to be used when adequate safety precautions have been taken in accordance with NFPA 160, *Flame Effects Before an Audience*, 2001 Edition.

Fire Watch Required During Theatrical Performances. In accordance with Section 403.1 of the Fire Prevention Code, the owner, agent, or lessee of any venue where a theatrical performance is conducted using open-flame decorative devices shall provide one or more fire watch personnel to remain on duty during the times such places are open to the public, or when such activity is being conducted.

Duties of Fire Watch Personnel. In accordance with Section 403.1.1 of the Fire Prevention Code, fire watch personnel shall keep diligent watch for fires, obstructions to means of egress and other hazards during the time such place is open to the public or such activity is being conducted and take prompt measures for remediation of hazards, extinguishment of fires that occur and assist in the evacuation of the public.

PERMIT APPLICATION & APPROVAL

Permit Application. Submit a completed FPCP application along with all representative open-flame device samples to the address listed below. Make payment in the form of check or money order payable to "County of Fairfax." Be sure to indicate the type of open-flame permit you are seeking by writing down either one-time use or continued use along with the permit type and fee amount. The FPCP application is available at the following Internet address:

One-Time Use / Each Event

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fire-ems/sites/fire-ems/files/assets/documents/pdf/fire%20marshal/openflameappla.pdf>

Continued Use in Restaurants, Drinking Establishments, Assembly Halls & Dining Areas

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fire-ems/sites/fire-ems/files/assets/documents/pdf/fire%20marshal/openflameapplb.pdf>

Approval of Open-Flame Devices. Submit a representative sample of each of type of open-flame decorative device requiring approval under a permit application. Photographs or drawing will not be accepted as substitute for a sample. Also provide manufactures' instructions, safety guidelines, device specification sheets, and Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) where provided. *Note:* Absent these documents, the Fire Marshal's Office can only make a subjective evaluation on the safety and adequacy of a particular sample with respect to compliance with requirements of the Fire Prevention Code.

Submit FPCP applications and samples to: **Fairfax County Fire & Rescue Department
Fire Marshal's Office
12099 Government Center Parkway
Fairfax, VA 22035
ATTN: *Open-Flame Device Approval***

CANDLE SAFETY TIPS

Always keep a burning candle within sight. Extinguish all candles when leaving a room or before going to sleep.

Never burn a candle on or near anything that can ignite. Place candles away from drapes, bedding, carpets, books, paper, flammable decorations, etc.

Keep candles out of the reach of children and pets. Don't place burning candles where they might be knocked over by children or pets.

Trim candlewicks to ¼ inch each time before burning. Long or crooked wicks cause uneven burning and dripping.

Always use a candleholder specifically designed for candle use. The holder should be heat resistant, sturdy and large enough to contain drippings or melted wax.

Be sure the candleholder is placed on a stable, heat-resistant surface. This will also help prevent possible heat damage to underlying surfaces and prevent glass containers from cracking or breaking.

Keep the wax pool free of wick trimmings, matches and debris at all times. Always read and follow the manufacturer's use and safety instructions carefully.

Don't burn a candle longer than the manufacturer recommends.

Always burn candles in a well-ventilated room. Don't burn too many candles in a small room or in a "tight" home where air exchange is limited.

Keep burning candles away from drafts, vents, ceiling fans and air currents. This will help prevent rapid, uneven burning, and avoid flame flare-ups and soot development. Drafts can also blow lightweight curtains or papers into the flame where they could catch fire.

Don't burn a candle all the way down. Extinguish the flame if it comes too close to the holder or container. For a margin of safety, discontinue burning a candle when 2 inches of wax remains or ½ inch if in a container.

Never touch or move a burning candle when the wax is liquid.

Never use a knife or sharp object to remove wax drippings from a glass holder. It might scratch, weaken, or cause the glass to break upon subsequent use.

Place burning candles at least three inches apart. This ensures they won't melt one another, or create drafts that can cause the candles to flare-up.

Use a snuffer to extinguish a candle. It's the safest way to prevent hot wax splatters.

Never extinguish candles with water. The water can cause the hot wax to splatter and might cause a glass container to break.

Be very careful if using candles during a power outage. Flashlights and other battery-powered lights are safer sources of light during a power failure.

Make sure a candle is completely extinguished and the wick is no longer glowing before leaving the room.

Extinguish a candle if it flickers repeatedly, smokes, or the flame becomes too high. The candle isn't burning properly. Let it cool, trim the wick, check for drafts and then re-light.

Battery-operated candles are a good alternative for decorative effect lighting. Using battery-operated decorative candles in lieu of candles or other open-flame decorative devices reduces the chance of a fire and eliminates the need for a permit in assembly and educational occupancies. In addition, battery-operated decorative candles are reusable.

Never use a candle as a night light.

Fairfax County is committed to a policy of non-discrimination in all county programs, services, and activities. Upon request, the Fire Marshal's Office can provide documents and publications in alternative formats and in different languages. Please call 703-246-4753 (TTY: 711 or 1-800-828-1120) or write us at the following address: Fire Marshal's Office, 12099 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA 22035. Allow at least seven to ten working days for preparation of material.