

Candles and Decorative Open-Flame Devices in Assembly Occupancies

Background

Candles and decorative open-flame devices are permitted in places of assembly and drinking and dining establishments when, in the opinion of the fire code official, safeguards have been taken to prevent accidental fires and burn injuries. This is addressed in Section 308 of the Minnesota State Fire Code (MSFC).

Religious ceremonies

Candles and other open-flame devices are allowed in religious ceremonies when adequate safeguards have been taken. For example:

- Lighted candles shall not be passed from one person to another.
- Lighted candles should only be used by persons 15 years of age and older.
- A device should be provided to protect hands from melting wax.
- Lighted candles should not be tilted to light another candle.
- Lighted candles should be kept away from easily ignited materials. Particular attention should be paid to clothing that could be easily ignited.
- Persons should remain stationary with lighted candles.
- When approved by fire code official, lighted hand-held candles may be carried.

Aisles and exits in places of worship

- Candles are prohibited in areas where people are standing.
 - People usually stand during seasonal religious observances such as Christmas and Easter.
- Candles are prohibited in aisles and exits.
 - Especially at wedding ceremonies, candles are preferred along the aisle to the altar, which is prohibited by the fire code. If occupants had to exit in an emergency, the candles could be knocked over into the means of egress.

Theatrical performances

Theatrical performances, when approved by the fire code official, shall comply with [NFPA 160](#).



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Flaming food and beverage preparation

- See MSFC Section 308.1.8 for requirements when preparing and serving flaming food or beverages in an assembly occupancy or drinking and dining establishments
- It must be prepared in the immediate vicinity of the table being served.
- It must never be transported or carried while burning.

Decorative open-flame devices (other than religious and theatrical)

- Only use fuels with a flashpoint greater than 140 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Liquid- or solid-fueled devices containing more than 8 ounces must self-extinguish and not leak more than 1/4 teaspoon per minute if tipped over.
- Devices or holders shall be designed so that they will return to an upright position when tilted to an angle of 45 degrees from vertical except units that self-extinguish and do not leak more than 1/4 teaspoon per minute if tipped over.
- The flame shall be enclosed in a chimney that may have side openings no larger than 3/8 inch. The distance to the opening at the top of the chimney shall be such that a piece of tissue placed at the top will not ignite in 10 seconds.
- Chimneys and shades, if used, shall be noncombustible and securely fastened to the device unless the device is self-extinguishing.
- Fuel canisters shall be safely sealed for storage.
- Candelabras with flame-lighted candles shall be securely fastened in place to prevent overturning and located away from people, drapes, curtains and other readily combustible materials in the area.

Group R occupancies

- Other than Group R-2 dormitories, Group R occupancies shall comply with MSFC Sections 308.1 through 308.1.6.3.
- Open-flame devices, candles and incense are not allowed in Group R-2 dormitory sleeping units.
 - Candle and incense use presents a significant life safety risk in the typical residence hall. According to NFPA fire loss data, there is an average of 1,425 fires per year in dorms, and candle use has the largest dollar loss at \$2.3 million annually.

Contact us

More information is available from the Minnesota State Fire Marshal Division by sending an email to fire.code@state.mn.us. Check our [website](#) for more fire code information.

