



Stay Safe Against the Coronavirus



MAINTAIN PHYSICAL DISTANCE
Even if you feel well, stay at home as much as possible. In public, keep at least 6-feet distance from others. Avoid unnecessary appointments.



PRACTICE GOOD HYGIENE
Wear a face mask or covering in public. Cover your cough and sneezes. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.



PROTECT LOUISIANANS AT RISK
Take special caution to avoid exposing the elderly and people with underlying health conditions. Stay home when sick.

GUIDELINES FOR TEMPORARY PARTITIONS OR DIVIDERS in SCHOOLS

August 13, 2020

Preface:

These guidelines are intended to only address fire safety and means of egress requirements for existing school buildings and spaces during the COVID-19 pandemic. Refer to the Louisiana Department of Health, the Louisiana Department of Education, the CDC, or other approved sources for recommendations regarding mitigation of the spread of the virus. See also the “Additional Resources” section below for further guidance.

The Office of State Fire Marshal (OSFM) is aware that there are recommendations to sub-divide spaces with temporary partitions within schools in an attempt to reduce the spread of the virus. Existing spaces within educational occupancies are currently approved to be occupied as constructed prior to the pandemic. Changes made to the approved designs that affect the code prescribed fire protection or means of egress requirements are considered to be renovations, whereby plans are typically required to be submitted to this office for plan review (per R.S. 40:1574. B). The addition of partitions or dividers within these spaces may have an effect on fire protection and egress requirements.

In light of the immediate need to occupy the buildings, the OSFM is providing the following general guidance in lieu of requiring a formal plan review submittal (as authorized by Section 11 of 102-JBE-2020). It is, however, encouraged to submit the proposed plans for review - prior to installation - if there is any question regarding safety. Plans may be emailed to SFMDispatch@gmail.com and every attempt will be made to respond within two working days.

These arrangements are ONLY temporary and shall be removed prior to full normal occupancy of the buildings, once the pandemic is no longer a threat.

Materials:

The materials used for temporary partitions or dividers must, at minimum, be "Flame Retardant". Specifically;

- Loosely hanging materials such as draperies, curtains, tarpaulins, or other sheeting must be certified to meet **NFPA 701** standards for flame propagation performance (per NFPA 101:14.7.4.1 & 10.3.) The packaging should indicate "Flame Retardant" and the testing criteria may be included with the product or may be found in the manufacturer's data/specifications for the proposed products.
- Clear pliable plastic (polyethylene) sheeting materials will not meet these requirements, however, opaque plastic sheeting may. Polyethylene is highly flammable and combustible. The chemicals that are added to this product to make them fire retardant are opaque and will change the color to milky white or a darker color. If clearer vision is needed, vinyl products may be found that are polished clear however they are typically much thicker and may have a steeper cost. Verify that testing per NFPA 701 standards has been performed prior to purchase. Surface applied treatments to these products after purchase may not be effective.
- Polycarbonates, such as Lexan or Plexiglas, are typically tested for flammability using other test methods and are acceptable. Please verify with the product manufacturer that the materials that you choose are listed by Underwriters Laboratories (UL), Factory Mutual (FM), or other approved testing laboratory as flame retardant.
- Materials that are solely tested in accordance with ASTM E-84 standards are not appropriate for loosely hanging dividers unless they have also been tested per NFPA 701 standards. The ASTM E-84 test is used for materials that are applied as finishes directly over solid walls, columns or ceilings (i.e. wallpaper & paneling.) It indicates the surface flame spread and smoke development characteristics of the material and will be identified with a classification such as "Class A".
- Rough textile materials or any cellular foam based materials should be avoided unless NFPA 701 testing data is provided by the manufacturer. Surface applied treatments to these products after purchase are not acceptable.

Means of Egress:

- Partitions must NOT be located in any designated egress path (corridor or aisles) nor block access to any exit. They should be arranged in such a way that will not increase the travel distance to an exit, nor force travel away from an exit.
- In large assembly spaces, such as gymnasiums and cafeterias, at least one exit or exit sign must be clearly visible and readily accessible from each space that is subdivided by a temporary partition.
- During any Phase during the pandemic, the maximum capacity of each subdivided space shall not exceed 49 persons unless two or more exits are clearly visible and readily accessible from all portions of the subdivided space.

Other Considerations:

- In sprinkled buildings, the tops of partitions and dividers shall be placed no closer than 18" below the bottom of the sprinkler heads. Sprinkler piping or heads shall not be used to support these items.
- Where ceiling-mounted smoke detectors are located within the space, partitions and dividers shall be placed no closer than 12" below the bottom of the ceilings in spaces with up to a 10-foot ceiling height. Spaces with higher ceilings shall allow for spacing equal to 10% of the ceiling height (i.e. 18" for 15-foot high ceilings, 24" for 20-foot high ceilings, etc.).
- Where beam smoke detectors are used, partitions or dividers shall not obstruct the path of the beams.

Additional Resources:

- [Strong Start reopening guidance](#) includes the minimum safety standards all schools must meet as well as best practices and additional guidance.
- [implementing Strong Start toolkit](#) includes resources for schools on putting these plans into practice and some examples of reopening models.
- Minimum safety standards for nonpublic schools:
[https://go.boarddocs.com/la/bese/Board.nsf/files/BRDTN7782333/\\$file/B741NP.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/la/bese/Board.nsf/files/BRDTN7782333/$file/B741NP.pdf)