

This summary is not intended to be all-inclusive of the fire and life safety codes surrounding signage and decorations; this is a quick reference guide. Please contact Fire and Life Safety ([firesafety@duke.edu](mailto:firesafety@duke.edu)) if additional guidance is needed prior to displaying decorations or signage.

Detailed information may also be found in the links below:

**University Safety Manual:** <https://www.safety.duke.edu/safety-manuals/university-safety-manual>

**DUHS Facility Decorations Policy:** <https://www.safety.duke.edu/files/DUHS-Facility-Decorations-1-15.pdf>

## DEFINITIONS

**Decorative Materials:** Decorative materials include, but are not limited to: curtains, draperies, fabrics, streamers, bulletin boards, artwork, posters, photographs, paintings, signs, etc.

**Suspended:** Suspended means hanging, taped, tacked or attached in any manner that any portion of the item can be easily lifted away from the wall, creating an air gap.

**Combustible:** Anything capable of producing smoke or flame [e.g., plastics, paper (including laminated paper), canvas, etc.]

## COMBUSTIBLE DECORATION LIMITATIONS

Doors within patient care areas (including staff office doors) cannot have combustible decorations placed upon them.

*EXCEPTION:* A single 8.5 x 11 paper (equivalent to approximately 5% of the door surface) that contains **important patient care information** provided it is attached in a manner that is not considered "suspended".

Combustible decorative materials that are displayed on a wall (including glass walls) **cannot** exceed the following:

- 10% of the wall or ceiling in all **corridors** within a patient care unit.
- 30% of the wall, ceiling, or non-rated door areas **inside any room or space** of a smoke compartment.
- 50% of the wall or ceiling **inside a patient sleeping room**. (This **is not** in addition to other items already installed to provide care.)

*NOTE:* Bulletin or white boards are considered decorations. Additional decorative items displayed upon these shall not extend past the perimeter of the bulletin board or approved wall area.

## DECORATIVE MATERIALS THAT ARE ALWAYS ALLOWED

The amount of non-combustible decorations (e.g., metal, glass, etc.) is not limited or restricted. Many printed materials can be done on glass, metal, etc.

Wall coverings, ceiling coverings, floor coverings, approved interior finishes, and materials 0.025 inch or less in thickness applied directly to and adhering to a substrate.

Specially manufactured products that meet Class A interior finish may be available as a substitute for combustible decorations, sometimes at no additional cost depending upon the vendor.

## PROHIBITED CONDITIONS (contact Fire and Life Safety for additional guidance)

Conflicting Signage: Way-finding or other directional signage **cannot** conflict with required exit signage.

Explosive, highly flammable, combustible fibers, or any other materials that pose an unusually high hazard.

Combustible Fibers: Combustible fibers include, but are not limited to readily ignitable and free-burning materials in a fibrous or shredded form, such as cloth, cotton, hay, straw, corn fodder, dried flowers, bamboo, certain synthetic fibers, and similar materials.

Three-dimensional items attached to a wall.

Foam board **cannot** be used for as a decorative material itself or as a substrate for other decorations.

Anything covering or obstructing exits, access to/from, visibility of any fire/life safety fixture or system component (e.g., exit signs, exit doors, exit access doors, door handles, pull stations, fire extinguishers, strobe lights, etc.) in any manner.

Easels or similar displays ("pop up," free standing banners).

*EXCEPTION:* Easels or similar displays may be permitted if they do not interfere with the means of egress (e.g., outside of the clear width requirement, in an alcove, etc.) and fire protection systems, but they must still meet the general 10% limit.