FPB POLICY 2014-1: Open Flame Decorative Devices
Created: May 13, 2014 Effective Date: June 1, 2017 Immediately
From the Office of the Fire Prevention Bureau – Phone (515) 283-4240

This policy is promulgated in accordance with Section 104.1 of the 2015 International Fire Code (IFC) and is an official interpretation of Section 308.3.1 of the International Fire Code.

The following shall apply to any uses of open flame decorative devices in any occupancy (note: this policy does NOT apply to 1 and 2 family dwellings).
Section 308.3.1 of the International Fire Code reads as follows:

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 57 of IFC 2015.
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.

In the 2015 version of the IFC these requirements are a subsection to 308.3 which applies to Group A occupancies. In previous editions the contents of Section 308.3.1 were in their own section which applied to all occupancy classifications. Because the section was not replaced with any guidance for other occupancies, applying the requirements of 308.3.1 to all occupancies is a prudent measure for fire safety in Des Moines. Therefore, per Section 104.1 of the IFC the requirements of Section 308.3.1 of the IFC shall apply to all occupancies.

Any comments or questions regarding the above information may be submitted to:

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