



## OREGON FIRE CODE Interpretations and Technical Advisories

A collaborative service by local and state fire professionals, along with our stakeholders and customers, to provide consistent and concise application of Oregon's fire prevention and life safety regulations.

**Date:** April 1, 2014

**Ruling:** Interpretation No. 14-02 (Revised #98-20, 05-03 & 11-02)

**Subject:** Recycling in Group E (Educational) Occupancies: Specifically classrooms.

**Code Reference:** 2014 Oregon Fire Code, Section 319.

**Question(s):** 1) Does the Oregon Fire Code apply to recycling in Group E occupancy classrooms?

2) Does the maximum quantity of paper vary depending on the number of desks in each room?

3) What is the maximum quantity allowed?

4) Should there be amendments to Section 319 to provide for language more consistent with regards to application and enforcement in occupancies it was intended for?

**Answer(s):** Question #1: Yes. Refer to language specified in Section 319.5(2) where it specifically mentions classrooms.

Question #2: Yes. In determining the maximum quantity, the code is intended to apply to classrooms in the following manner: teachers' desks only may have containers as specified in Section 319.3. As for student desks, containers are not allowed as this would violate the language in Section 319.5(2) which states ".....that constitutes a hazard greater than would be expected in a normal .....classroom....." In the case of classrooms, there could more than a single teacher's desk and it would be expected that another container could be located next to each desk.

Question #3: Section 319.3(1) establishes the threshold amounts for determining the maximum quantity allowed. In classrooms, this amounts to a maximum 15 gallons at each *teacher's* (emphasis by OSFM) desk. Since there could be more than one teacher's desk in each classroom, the amount would be doubled by the number of teacher's desks in each room.

**NOTE:** Some confusion exists whether Section 319.3(2), (3) or (4) applies as well. It is the opinion of the State Fire Marshal that this is consistent with the intent of the language in Section

319.5(2). However, fire code officials must look at each situation independently and determine, based on a totality of fire and life safety issues (construction, fire protection features, life risk, other fuel loading, etc.), if additional recycling materials are actually creating an unacceptable hazard which requires correction. In such cases, it would be the intent of the regulation to establish a balance between fire hazard risk management and diversion of recycling of materials which would otherwise end up in the waste system. Use of the maximum allowable quantities (MAQ) concept used in other parts of the Oregon Fire Code (OFC) **is not** the intent here and should not be used to determine allowable quantities. When fire code officials decide that increased quantities of recycling materials can be allowed, it is the recommendation of the State Fire Marshal that Section 319.3(2), (3) and (4) would provide guidelines for such decisions based on the appropriate room size.

Question #4. Since the OFC is reviewed and updated approximately every three years, amendments to this section would appropriately be handled through the OSFM rules adoption processes. This allows all interested parties or organizations to provide input on how best to make regulations work for all concerned stakeholders. It is the opinion of the State Fire Marshal that if this section of the OFC is unclear for fire officials or others to interpret and enforce, then those individuals should propose amendments for the next adoption of the OFC. In this way, the intent can be more clearly specified and potential for consistency in enforcement is more likely.

**NOTE:** The term “Accepted” as it applies to recycling containers in section 319.4 was specifically discussed in the interpretation process as part of this question. The use of this term was based on the fact that fire code officials are familiar with the term “Approved” and its definition in the OFC. Until such times as experience or other information indicates unacceptable fire losses, current containers should be considered as acceptable and reasonably safe for public uses.

**Other References:** N/A