

## **DISPLAY OF STUDENT ARTWORK AND EDUCATIONAL TEACHING MATERIALS IN SCHOOL CORRIDORS (August, 2001)**

Student art displays and educational teaching materials are an integral part of educational programs in schools. However, too much paper on school corridor walls can create a continuous, combustible surface that could cause a fire to spread rapidly. Paper or draperies in doorways are also particularly dangerous, potentially blocking a route of escape from the building. Blocking exits or exit signs in any manner is not allowed by state fire code.

Section 1191.3b1 of the New York State Fire Prevention and Building Code allows a **limited** amount of student artwork and educational teaching materials to be placed in areas of public assembly, and associated exitways, including school corridors. Requirements for displaying artwork and teaching materials are shown below:

- ✓ All displayed material must be kept at least 2 feet from ceilings and 10 feet from exit doors, including classroom doors.
- ✓ Displayed material must be directly affixed to noncombustible wall surfaces.
- ✓ The total amount of displayed material may not exceed 20% of the noncombustible wall surface.
- ✓ For added safety, artwork must be treated with a fire retardant.

Another recent concern has developed from the use of foam core mounting board in student art displays and teaching materials. The material is combustible, emits toxic vapors when ignited, and contributes to the spread of a fire (see picture below). Foam core mounting board, if used, should be enclosed in a noncombustible display case with glass. The case must be attached directly to a noncombustible wall. Recent New York State School fires were much more severe as a result of student artwork as attested to by the responding fire chiefs.

### **Foam Mounting Board Test Burn (time: 1.5 minutes)**

