

Security and Barricade Devices on Classroom Doors

Background

The Minnesota State Fire Code (MSFC) and Minnesota State Building Code both require egress doors to be immediately operable without use of a key, without special knowledge or effort, and to release with a single operation. The use of door security and barricade devices that do not comply with these basic requirements are prohibited.

Requirements for egress door operation

- **MSFC 1008.1.8 Door operations.** Except as specifically permitted by this section egress doors shall be readily openable from the egress side without the use of a key or special knowledge or effort.
- **MSFC 1008.1.8.1 Hardware.** Except as permitted by Section 1008.1.8.3, door handles, pulls, latches, locks and other operating devices on doors shall only require a single operation to release the door from the egress side.

Rationale against the use of door security and barricade devices

Time and performance limitations

Door security and barricade devices typically must first be removed from their storage location and then additional time is necessary for installation. Some devices require several steps for installation, and may prove difficult under stressful conditions. Although a certain percentage of people are able to effectively perform complex tasks under emergency conditions, this is not the case for everyone. Time is also a critical factor during a lockdown emergency, and the time necessary to employ a security or barricade device may not be available.

Impeded egress

Many door security devices, once employed, do not allow for quick and unimpeded egress. There may be circumstances during a lockdown emergency where it will be necessary to quickly exit the classroom or building, including:

- Fire set by an assailant
- Explosive device detonated by an assailant
- Gas leak initiated by an assailant
- Hazardous/toxic material introduced by an assailant
- An assailant entering or firing a weapon through an exterior window

Additionally, if a teacher or staff member were to become incapacitated for any reason, the children (especially the younger ones) may be incapable of removing the security device. This not only would prevent the occupants from exiting the room, but would also prevent timely access by emergency personnel.



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Unintended consequences — a barrier to emergency personnel

Another major concern is the potential for a door security device to be used by a student, staff member or intruder for the purpose of committing an assault or other serious crimes. Most door security and barricade devices would prevent school staff, law enforcement and other emergency responders from entering the classroom, creating an unintended safety hazard and liability risk for the district. Conversely, a code-compliant classroom security lockset allows staff or emergency personnel the ability to quickly unlock a classroom door from the outside by use of a key.

Code-compliant solutions

Classroom security concerns during a lockdown emergency are well understood, and fortunately this problem is easily addressed via the use of code-compliant egress/security hardware. Proper door hardware eliminates the need for security and barricade devices while maintaining free egress. Commonly known as a *classroom security lockset*, this type of hardware allows exit doors to be quickly and securely locked from the classroom side, and may even include a deadbolt feature for added security. Activation of the locking hardware is quick and simple by operation of a thumb-turn device or key from the classroom side (these locks are available in either configuration). Such hardware fully complies with both the state fire and building codes because normal operation of the handle on the classroom side automatically releases the latch and deadbolt, allowing for free egress.

Summary

Although at first glance the use of door security and barricade devices may appear to offer a practical solution to lockdown security, their use creates additional and unacceptable hazards – hazards that have successfully been addressed by fire and building code language born of past tragedies. Current codes allow fire-safety, life-safety, and security to be accomplished in balance without one negatively affecting the other.

