



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE FIRE MARSHALS

Classroom Door Security & Locking Hardware

The ability to protect students, teachers, and administrators from threatening situations is a high priority in all educational institutions. Many schools, school districts, colleges, and universities have taken measures to address this pressing concern of safety of occupants in schools, and especially classrooms. While protection against active shooters and violent events is a main concern, bullying and other affronts to personal safety also occur. Occupants of schools, including after-hours occupants, should be provided with a safe and secure educational environment.

Some of the proposed or implemented solutions specifically affecting classroom doors, while well intended, may compromise aspects of life safety while attempting to address security. In addition to the demand to protect students and teachers from outside-the-classroom threats, classroom doors are required to comply with other life safety and accessibility provisions.

To help prevent fire spread in a school building, building codes, fire codes, and life safety codes may require classroom doors to be fire-rated doors. Fire-rated doors are required to be self-latching when closed to ensure they perform their intended protective function in the event of a fire.

To facilitate immediate egress from the classroom, building codes, fire codes, and life safety codes require doors from inside the room (the egress side) to unlock and unlatch with one motion without the use of a key, tool, special knowledge, or effort.

To ensure access to and from classrooms by all occupants regardless of physical ability, classroom doors are required to meet federal accessibility laws, and building and fire code requirements, which include the ability to operate door hardware with no tight grasping, tight pinching, or twisting of the wrist; and the door operating hardware must be located between 34" and 48" above the floor. Federal accessibility laws and building codes require the bottom 10" of the push side of the door to be a smooth surface.

When selecting hardware which allows classroom doors to be lockable from inside the room, consideration must be given to the risks and potential consequences of utilizing a device which blocks the door from the inside potentially impeding or preventing immediate egress by occupants, at any time, and under any conditions.

Devices which prevent classroom doors from being unlocked and opened from outside the classroom may place the inhabitants of the room in peril. In addition to the requirement that classroom doors must be unlockable and unlatchable in a single motion from inside the classroom (discussed above), these doors should always be unlockable and openable from outside the classroom by authorized persons.

The "School Security – Classroom Door Checklist" on the next page identifies many parameters which should be satisfied when selecting and installing hardware on classroom doors intended to increase security in the classroom.

School Security – Classroom Door Checklist

- 1. The door should be lockable from inside the classroom without requiring the door to be opened¹
- 2. Egress from the classroom through the classroom door should be without the use of a key, a tool, special knowledge, or effort²
- 3. For egress, unlatching the classroom door from inside the classroom should be accomplished with one operation³
- 4. The classroom door should be lockable and unlockable from outside the classroom⁴
- 5. Door operating hardware should be operable without tight grasping, tight pinching, or twisting of the wrist⁵
- 6. Door hardware operable parts should be located between 34 and 48 inches above the floor⁶
- 7. The bottom 10 inches of the "push" side of the door surface should be smooth⁷
- 8. If the school building does not have an automatic fire sprinkler system, the classroom door and door hardware may be required to be fire-rated and the door should be self-closing and self-latching⁸
- 9. If the door is required to be fire-rated, the door should not be modified in any way that invalidates the required fire-rating of the door and / or door hardware⁹

In the Classroom Door Checklist, "should" is used throughout. However, based upon building codes, life safety codes, fire codes, and federal, state, and / or local laws and regulations that are applicable to a particular school, these requirements may be MANDATORY. Always check, and comply with, all applicable building and fire codes, life safety codes, and laws, regulations and other requirements.

¹ To help protect teachers and students in the classroom, the classroom door should be lockable from inside the classroom without requiring the door to be opened.

² Building codes, life safety codes, and fire codes require doors in the means of egress to be openable without the use of a key, a tool, special knowledge, or effort to ensure all occupants have the ability to evacuate the building quickly and easily in an emergency situation

³ Building codes and fire codes require doors in the means of egress to be unlatched with only one operation. Door hardware which requires more than one operation to unlock / unlatch the door is not allowed.

⁴ To allow securing the classroom during times the classroom is not occupied; and to allow access to the classroom at all times by authorized personnel.

⁵ Building codes, fire codes, and Federal accessibility laws require door hardware to be operable without tight grasping, pinching, or twisting of wrist to ensure all occupants have the ability to operate and open the door.

⁶ Building codes, fire codes, and Federal accessibility laws require the operable components of door hardware, such as lockset lever handles, to be located within a relatively small range of height (34" to 48" above the floor). Door hardware which requires reaching above 48" to operate or requires reaching below 34" to operate is not allowed.

⁷ Building codes and Federal accessibility laws require the bottom 10" of the push side of the door to be a smooth surface.

⁸ If the school building is not protected by a fire sprinkler system installed and maintained in accordance with building and fire code requirements, most building codes and fire codes require classroom doors which open to an interior corridor to be fire-rated. Doors required to be fire-rated are also required to be self-closing and self-latching to ensure the fire-rated door is closed and latched in the event of a fire. Classroom doors that open directly to the outside are usually not be required to be fire-rated. Classroom doors in a school building protected by a code-compliant fire sprinkler system may not be required to be fire-rated and may not be required to be self-closing and self-latching.

⁹ To ensure the fire rating of a door is maintained, modifications or alterations to doors required to be fire-rated are required to be done under the supervision of the door manufacturer or by a company specifically authorized by the door manufacturer.