

Opening the Door to School Safety

DSSF Video and Public Relations Campaign Stresses Importance of Securing Classrooms without Compromising Life Safety

By Jerry Heppes Sr., CAE

Door barricade devices in schools are intended to keep dangerous individuals out of classrooms; but what if that person is already in the room? To highlight the dangers of these devices and to provide assistance in better understanding secure and safe classroom door openings, the Door Security & Safety Foundation has created a short educational video as the centerpiece of our new public relations campaign, *Opening the Door to School Safety*, which launched in December.

In response to school shootings, several states have or are considering changes to their building codes to allow for the installation of classroom door barricade devices. The Foundation took up this fight in Ohio in 2015 to testify before the Board of Building Standards (BBS) after PTO/PTAs raised \$30,000 to purchase barricade devices for their schools. These groups did so with all good intentions but were unaware of the code violations and unintended consequences that could arise.

The Foundation partnered with National Association of State Fire Marshals (NASFM), Builders Hardware Manufacturers Association (BHMA) and several members of the industry, including Lori Greene,

DAHC/CDC, FDAI, FDHI, CCPR, who testified on behalf of the Foundation, and Mark Berger, President of Securitech. Ultimately the Board ruled in our favor and against the barricade devices, but it was attached to budgetary legislation which was passed by the legislature, which then required the BBS to consider and approve the use of these devices.

The Foundation's Board of Trustees saw this as an issue upon which we needed to take a larger public position, and they voted to allocate significant funds from the Foundation budget to launch a public relations campaign. A professional public relations firm, Kellen Co., was hired to take the lead. Our campaign, *Opening the Door to School Safety*, is focused around a three-minute video whose message is to raise awareness and educate school administrators and PTOs/PTAs about the importance of safely securing classroom doors with code compliant methods and the potential unintended consequences of using barricade devices.

Safety isn't just about closing the door, it's also about opening the door. Security should never take priority over life safety; they must work hand in hand, especially during an emergency situation. Classroom door





barricade devices violate building, fire and life safety codes and can easily be misused by someone inside the room intending to cause harm.

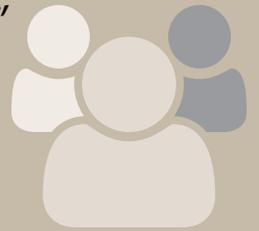
The video features two safety and security experts, Brian Geraci, Maryland State Fire Marshal and Board Member of NASFM, as well as Guy Grace, Director of Security and Emergency Planning, Littleton (Colo.) Public Schools. Grace knows all too well why such devices are not the way to go, as his school, Arapahoe High School in Littleton, endured an active shooter situation in 2013. He is a vocal opponent against barricade devices and advocates for using the correct door and hardware solutions to ensure life safety and security for his students and staff every day, as well as in an emergency situation.

While these barricade devices are perceived to provide additional security, they have the significant potential to facilitate unintended consequences when incidents of bullying, harassment, or physical violence take place. They can prevent access by school staff or emergency responders and delay egress in the case of emergencies such as a fire, which is greater than three times more likely to happen than an active shooter situation.

School shootings, although widely publicized, are rare; cases of school bullying and harassment are not. According to the National Center for Education, in 2012, students ages 12–18 were victims of more than 1.37 million nonfatal victimizations at school, including 615,600 thefts and 749,200 violent acts; 89,000 of which were serious violent victimizations.

WATCH, SHARE, GIVE

Please watch the video, share it on your website, social media, email signature, and email messages to your school customers, family and friends. This isn't just business; this is personal. Share the resources and messages on our website, including the fact sheet, white paper and stats. Contact our staff if you'd like to help and need additional support. Your financial support helps to spread this message and supports our other important programs.



SHARE THESE ONLINE RESOURCES:

- Video
- Fact Sheet
- White Paper
- Statistics
- Find A Pro
- Connect on Social Media



SAFETY ISN'T JUST ABOUT CLOSING THE DOOR. IT'S ALSO ABOUT OPENING THE DOOR.

While the Foundation and its supporters are devastated by the active shooting tragedies and agree that schools must be safe havens for students, faculty and visitors alike, we believe that a safe solution can be achieved within the proven building code process.

As DHI members know so well, there are numerous traditional locking products manufactured today by a variety of companies that provide specifically designed classroom security locking functions that meet the code requirements for providing life safety in addition to security. These products allow the door to be locked from the inside of a classroom without requiring the door to be opened, yet allow authorized access by staff and emergency responders in the event that someone inside the room intends to cause harm or injury.

This is another opportunity for the Foundation to point to the experts—door security + safety professionals. Our website features a FIND A PRO search engine to connect to those who can provide the best solutions with school administrators and others who need your expertise.

In addition to NASFM, the Foundation is collaborating with The School Superintendents Association (AASA), which has members throughout North America, and many other allied organizations who are contacting their members on our behalf to get out this campaign to our key audiences. Our PR firm, Kellen, is making outreach to press in the U.S. and Canada, as this issue is a growing concern on both sides of the border. But we also need your help.

We ask that you watch the video, share the video on your website, social media, email signature, and email messages to your school customers, family and friends. This isn't just business; this is personal. Share the resources and messages on our website, including the fact sheet, white paper and stats. Feel free to contact our staff if you'd like to help and need additional support.

We also appreciate if you're able to contribute toward this effort, which you can also do on our website. Contact Sharon Newport, Vice President of Operations, snewport@dhi.org, with any questions you may have.

Thank You to Our Contributors

We have received tremendous support from the industry, which has contributed generous funds toward this campaign and the Foundation's work, as well as collaborative efforts to get this message out far and wide. We hope you will continue to support us in 2017.

To access these resources and begin to share and contribute, visit the Foundation's website at www.doorsecuritysafety.org. ■



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