Door Security & Safety FOUNDATION

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Classroom Door Security

The mission of the Door Security and Safety Foundation (DSSF) is "to promote safe and secure openings that enhance life safety." DSSF is dedicated to serving the public by advocating for safe openings through awareness, education and research.

Doorway systems are designed to instantly provide life safety or security depending upon the scenario—fire or threat. Accordingly, all proper door assembly designs equip the doorway to meet the NFPA 101 *Life Safety Code*. These intricate codes are met through complicated combinations of door and hardware products. The *Life Safety Code* appropriately prescribes the applicable balance.

Whether codes evolve in response to events like September 11, from active shooters in schools such as Columbine, or simply from specific industries, governmental authorities or the public, the good news is that they evolve in a time-tested system. The code process vets thousands of proposals in order to identify their impact, as well as to analyze unintended consequences from well-intended proposals.

With the recent well-publicized and horrific shootings at our schools, there is a growing public concern for safety in schools. Naturally, numerous opinions have evolved on improving student safety from an active shooter situation. In addition, several retrofit devices intended to provide protection for students while in the classroom are becoming available. Unfortunately, these products fall short of the code requirements.[1] It is critical that these devices are vetted through the formal code process to ensure that the proper balance is met.

The National Association of State Fire Marshals (NASFM; firemarshals.org) has published a white paper entitled *Classroom Door Security and Locking Hardware* to address its security concerns for several products being employed that unfortunately expose our students and faculty to unintended safety consequences. The document offers a School Security Suggested Classroom Door Checklist. This list identifies the critical parameters that need to be satisfied when designing a door system intended to increase security in the classroom. The Door Security and Safety Foundation endorses this document, as it is validated by specific codes and standards references.

DSSF CEO Jerry Heppes, CAE, states, "We are all very concerned and devastated by the active shooting tragedies and believe that we must ensure that our schools are safe havens for our youth. The best way to accomplish this goal is to work within the building code process to help avoid unintended consequences with life safety. According to testimony presented to the Sandy Hook

[1] "Barricade Device? Think Twice!" Lori Greene, AHC/CDC, FDAI, FDHI, CCPR. *Doors & Hardware*, May 2015.

Advisory Commission, there is not one documented incident of an active shooter breaching a locked classroom door by defeating the lock. Maintaining a balance of life safety and security is possible today using proven products that meet the NFPA 101 *Life Safety Code*. New devices being introduced may provide some level of additional security but can seriously compromise certain other aspects of life safety; that is why we have codes and standards. Unfortunately, these devices do not meet codes and may negatively affect life safety in the case of other emergencies such as a fire, which statistically is more than three times more likely to happen than an active shooter situation.[i] What are we trying to correct if there is not one documented incident of a classroom lock being defeated?"

Based on the statistics cited by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), to allow these products to be employed when they do not meet the codes is to put the public at greater harm.

- *"In 2012, students ages 12–18 were victims of about 1,364,900 nonfatal victimizations at school, including 615,600 thefts and 749,200 violent victimizations, 89,000 of which were serious violent victimizations."*
- *"During the 2009–10 school year, 85 percent of public schools recorded that one or more of these incidents of violence, theft, or other crimes had taken place, amounting to an estimated 1.9 million crimes."*
- *"During the 2011–12 school year, 9 percent of school teachers reported being threatened with injury by a student from their school. The percentage of teachers reporting that they had been physically attacked by a student from their school in 2011–12 (5 percent) was higher than in any previous survey year (ranging from 3 to 4 percent)."*

The ALICE Training Institute recently published a document that includes some guidance with regard to a barricade versus a door locking device. Item 1 on that list reads (in part): *"Door Locking Devices are subject to approval. According to the fire code, 'Security devices affecting means of egress shall be subject to approval of the fire code official.' Ensure that any application of a door locking device is not in violation of the fire code. A door locking device accepted by one fire marshal may be rejected by another jurisdiction."* The Door Security and Safety Foundation believes that no door locking device that also compromises life safety should be approved by any jurisdiction.

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[i] "Finding Reasonable Solutions to the Problem of School Safety." April Dalton. *Doors & Hardware*, March 2015.