



PRIORITY ONE: Keeping Students Safe

School Security FAQs for Fire Marshals

Questions from Parents and Others

How are Fire Marshals qualified to advise us on how to protect our kids from a shooting at their school?

As Fire Marshals, we are devoted to protecting human life, property and the environment. As part of this commitment, we endeavor to assure that school facilities have the proper protection and means of egress during an array of emergencies including school shootings.

With school shootings happening more frequently, can you help us prevent our school from experiencing such a tragedy?

Although every school shooting is tragic, these events are actually quite rare; nonfatal victimizations at school are thousands of times more likely to occur. Statistically, far more commonplace are other types of emergencies such as severe-weather events, fires and bomb threats, incidents related to drugs, alcohol, and mental health issues, suicide, bullying, and fights.

Why are you opposed to our using barricade devices to protect our children at school?

A district considering whether to install classroom barricades must take into account the possibility of an exit being accidentally or maliciously blocked during an emergency. Using a barricade device that blocks the door from the inside can impede or prevent the students from successfully leaving the classroom. Another dangerous threat imposed by barricade devices is that they prevent access from the outside, so even a staff member or emergency responder with a key would not be able to enter. In addition to the requirement that classroom doors must be unlockable and unlatchable in a single motion from inside the classroom, these doors should always be unlockable and be able to open from outside the classroom by authorized persons.

What kind of safety and security device do you propose we do use instead of barricade devices?

Locksets effectively secure classrooms against active shooters and allow occupants to exit without obstruction. In fact, testimony presented to the Sandy Hook Advisory Commission revealed that an active shooter has never breached a locked classroom door by defeating the lock.

Why are codes relevant to this discussion?

Because modern codes exist as the result of hard lessons learned from school fires and other tragedies. Moreover, the strength of your district's codes and their enforcement have a pivotal role in improving school security. Consider that:

- Code-compliant locksets that provide the right level of security are readily available and meet the requirements for egress, accessibility, and fire protection.
 - Barricade devices - which by design do not permit immediate, free exiting - do not meet the requirements of the published model codes or federal laws commonly adopted and enforced in the United States. Even if a state legislature allows districts within its jurisdiction to override certain code requirements, they cannot override federal laws governing accessibility.
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Classroom Security Considerations

Potential Liability:

All property owners have a duty to keep their premises safe for anyone legally allowed to be there, but a higher degree of care is required when dealing with students. If a property owner has violated a code, law, or regulation, that violation can generally be taken as proof that the owner was negligent and failed to use the required amount of care. A third-party legal opinion concluded that classroom barricade devices - which by their nature do not permit immediate, free egress - do not meet the requirements of the published model codes or federal laws commonly adopted and enforced in the United States. Even if a state legislature allows districts within its jurisdiction to override certain code requirements, they cannot override federal laws, and jurors might give more weight to established life safety codes than to state legislators when student safety is at stake.

Classroom Security Considerations:

- Immediate notification of a hostile event provides added time to secure classrooms, cover windows in and adjacent to the door, and move students out of the line of sight.
 - Teachers and staff – including substitute teachers – must have ready access to keys or access-control credentials needed to lock and unlock classroom doors.
 - Staff members must have a means of communicating with a central station or the main office.
 - Impact-resistant glazing or security film on glass adjacent to door hardware can help to delay unauthorized access to the classroom.
 - A written emergency action plan and periodic drills and tabletop exercises involving all key personnel will reinforce procedures and responsibilities and improve response time.
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For more information, please visit

www.BuildersHardware.com/SchoolSecurity