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**Division of Fire Safety**

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Door Locks:

Door locking hardware can provide added safety for school occupants in an intruder situation, but improperly installed locking mechanisms can prevent occupants from exiting a building should a fire or other emergency occur. For this reason, The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), International Association of Fire Chiefs and National Association of State Fire Marshals have published sound guidance on best practices to safely secure doors in an intruder situation while not diminishing life safety. Currently, the NFPA 101 Life Safety Code provides prescriptive language addressing acceptable door locking arrangements. The 2015 edition of this standard is adopted by the Vermont Division of Fire Safety along with jurisdictions across the country. Its provisions have helped to reduce fire losses in schools to nearly zero.

Doors “shall be opened readily from the egress side whenever the building is occupied” and “locks, if provided, shall not require the use of a key, a tool or special knowledge or effort” are provisions that remain fundamental to fire safety in the new 2018 edition of NFPA 101. Exterior doors for most schools (with over 100 occupants) require ‘panic’ hardware with a cross bar or push pad that allows the door to open with minimal horizontal pressure. Panic hardware on school doors are prohibited from having any locking device that prevents the door from opening when pressure is applied to the releasing device.

In light of increased security concerns, NFPA has provided greater clarification of door hardware requirements in the 2018 edition (in the process of adoption by the State of Vermont). These include:

- The door lock can be engaged from the room side without opening the door;
- The door can be opened from the room side without a key, tool or special knowledge or effort;
- The releasing mechanism be not less than 34 inches or more than 48 inches above the floor;
- The door shall be capable of being unlocked and opened from outside the room by authorized staff;
- The school’s emergency action plan shall address the locking and unlocking from within and outside the room;
- Staff shall be drilled in the engagement and release of any locking means as part of required emergency egress drills.

In addition, greater flexibility is provided in permitting delayed egress locking systems or sensor release of electrical locking systems in schools that have enhanced life safety systems, such as complete, automatic fire alarm systems or automatic fire sprinkler systems. Installation of special locking arrangements or devices should be done in conjunction with an overall school emergency response plan, and in consultation with your respective authority having jurisdiction (state or local fire marshal). Contact information for the four Division of Fire Safety regional offices are located at [www.firesafety.vermont.gov](http://www.firesafety.vermont.gov).

