



# SCHOOL SAFETY AND SECURITY

Current requirements and guidelines around door locking and fire alarm systems from the National Fire Protection Association® (NFPA®) help ensure the safety of students, teachers, and staff in the event of targeted violence threats. While many of these features are easy to address in new school construction, school administrators and fire officials have asked questions about implementing some of them in existing schools, as they can present challenges. The following questions and answers explain NFPA's current provisions and how they can be safely applied.

## School Safety FAQs

### Can classroom doors be locked to prevent an intruder from entering?

Yes, starting with the 2018 edition of NFPA 101®, *Life Safety Code*®, the Code contains rules that allow safe door locking to prevent intruders from gaining access while ensuring that people can still readily evacuate in an emergency. Doors need to have the ability to be unlocked from outside the classroom to permit entry by staff or first responders.

### Can classroom doors be barricaded to prevent intruders from entering a classroom?

No. NFPA 101 requires doors to be readily opened from the classroom side. Makeshift devices such as after-market locking and barricades, wedges, rope, and chains not only violate this rule, but can either slow down or prevent first responders from quickly entering a classroom, or they can be used by an intruder to trap people inside and keep first responders from getting in.

### Can exterior exit doors be locked to prevent unauthorized people from entering a school?

NFPA 101 permits exterior exit doors (those that lead directly to the outside) to be locked from the outside to control who can enter the building. From the inside, those same doors need to allow people to leave during emergencies. All occupants must be able to exit the building without needing a key, tool, or special knowledge or effort to open the door.

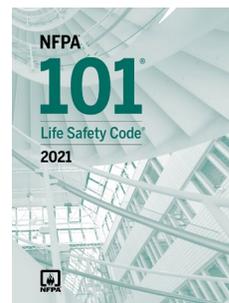
### Can a fire alarm system be disabled to prevent it from being used to draw people out into a school's common areas and outside?

NFPA 101 requires schools to have fire alarm systems. There are no allowances in the codes to disable them. These systems need to be maintained and operable to alert the occupants and protect people from the effects of fire. Schools, fire departments, and law enforcement agencies should coordinate to develop protocols for occupant response to fire alarms during targeted violence incidents.

### Are manual fire alarm boxes (pull stations) allowed to be removed?

Yes. NFPA 101 permits manual systems to be removed if the school is equipped with either an automatic sprinkler system or an automatic smoke detection system.

## NFPA 101, LIFE SAFETY CODE: A KEY ELEMENT OF SCHOOL SAFETY AND SECURITY



Used or applied by every state in the US, the *Life Safety Code* provisions require that virtually all types of buildings are designed and built so that people can safely escape in the event of a fire or other emergency. Visit [nfpa.org/101](https://www.nfpa.org/101) for more information and free access.



# SCHOOL SAFETY AND SECURITY *CONTINUED*

## Code Update

The 2021 edition of NFPA 101 expanded the term *classroom* to also include “other instructional spaces” and clarified the term *classroom side* to mean the *egress side*.

## Safe Door Locking

### What is code-compliant door locking?

Starting with the 2018 edition of NFPA 101, the Code provides two options for locking classroom doors from the inside. While the 2018 edition of the Code originally allowed for one door locking option, the NFPA Standards Council issued a Tentative Interim Agreement (TIA), which—for existing installations only—allows for a second type of door lock/latch combination that continues to deliver a high level of safety to students and staff.

#### Option One

The hardware for the first option is sometimes called an interconnected latch or lock, and is similar to what you might see in a hotel room. This type of locking mechanism can be used for newly installed doors. It can also be retrofitted on existing doors.



#### Option Two

The second option enables existing school classroom doors to be retrofitted with secondary hardware, which might include items such as a thumb turn lock. For existing classroom doors only, this option can be used in lieu of single operation hardware, which combines a latch and lock together.

This is one example of the second door locking option; it's called a dead bolt lock with a thumb turn:



Performance requirements related to these fixed locking devices include the following criteria regardless of the approach taken:

- The door must be lockable from the egress side without having to open it.
- The lock cannot require special knowledge, a key, or tool to engage or disengage from the egress side of the door.
- The two releasing operations, where permitted, must not be required to be performed simultaneously to unlock/unlatch the door.
- The lock must be installed at an acceptable height—between 34 in. to 48 in. above the floor.
- The door must have the ability to be unlocked and opened from outside the classroom with the necessary key or credential.
- The staff must be drilled in the engagement and release of locks.

## Learn More



Visit [nfpa.org/101](https://nfpa.org/101) for the latest on the standards development process and other NFPA 101 news.



For more information on NFPA's ongoing efforts to address building safety and security, visit [nfpa.org/blssolutions](https://nfpa.org/blssolutions).



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