

## The Liability of Classroom Door Barricades

The increased number of school shootings has created a growing public concern for safety in schools across North America. Each year, school administrators are faced with the challenge of finding ways of improving student safety from an active shooter situation despite budget cuts forcing them to defer costs for security upgrades. Unfortunately, these necessary improvements are put off, and only revisited after a horrific tragedy, such as a deadly school shooting.

As a result of this type of reactionary response, coupled with mounting pressure from parent organizations, several states have or are considering changes to their building codes to allow for the installation of classroom door barricade devices. While these devices are perceived to provide immediate security, they have the significant potential to facilitate unintended consequences that could put students at even more risk and the school in risk of liability.

Safety concerns associated with door barricade devices:

**NON CODE COMPLIANT:** These products fall short of building code requirements. In most cases, these devices are not tested through the formal code process to ensure that the proper balance of life safety and security are met.

**DELAYED RESPONSE:** When someone, other than the classroom teacher, who doesn't know where the barricade device is kept or how to install it properly is required to engage the device this could result in a delay at a critical time.

**UNAUTHORIZED ENGAGEMENT:** Storing a barricade device in a classroom makes crimes easier to carry out. When used by an unauthorized person, barricades have the significant potential to facilitate unintended consequences such as bullying, harassment or physical violence. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the FBI, a member of the student body is most likely to commit violence on school grounds.

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**BLOCKED ENTRY:** Because these devices are intended to serve as a barricade and prevent access from the outside, a staff member or emergency responder would not be able to enter a classroom. The intruders who carried out school shootings at Virginia Tech, the West Nickel Mines School and Platte Canyon High School each used materials to barricade the doors.

School districts looking to install classroom door barricades devices must also weigh the possibility of an exit being blocked during an emergency. In the event of a fire, these devices could delay egress resulting in fatalities. Fire is one of the leading reasons, in addition to countless other tragedies, that building codes have been adopted.

A case could be made by someone injured in a barricaded classroom against the school district because they failed to keep him or her safe while on school property. The injured party could claim he or she was trapped inside a locked classroom with no way for safety officers to enter freely.

School administrators should only consider traditional, tested, locking products 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 case someone inside the room intends to cause harm or injury.

*To learn more about classroom security locks or the dangers of door barricade devices, visit [www.LockDontBlock.org](http://www.LockDontBlock.org).*