



The conceptual classroom barricade devices shown here do not comply with model codes or accessibility standards, and could be used by an unauthorized person to secure a room and commit an assault or other crime.

When school districts attempt to improve classroom security quickly and within budgetary constraints, rushed decisions can sometimes lead to the purchase of retrofit devices - often called classroom barricade devices - that impede egress and may not be operable by small children or people with certain types of disabilities.

Evacuation is an important part of every facility's emergency plan, as is the need to keep all options open during an unpredictable active shooter / hostile event. The use of security devices that do not comply with the requirements of the life safety codes can delay or prevent building occupants from exiting. In addition, lockdown time may be increased while staff members locate the device and secure the door.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics: In 2016, students ages 12–18 experienced 749,400 victimizations at school (thefts and nonfatal violent victimizations). For the same year, the FBI's report of Active Shooter Incidents in the US identifies 3 such incidents that took place in schools. Planning to use classroom barricade devices during an active shooter event without considering the potential for misuse of the devices poses a risk to students and school staff.

Active assailant situations are only one type of hazard that administrators must plan for, and these events are statistically less likely to occur than other types of emergencies such as severe-weather events, fires and bomb threats, incidents related to drugs, alcohol, and mental health issues, suicide, bullying, fights and other non-fatal victimizations.

A classroom barricade device may be deployed by an unauthorized person to secure a classroom and commit an assault, sexual assault, or other crime. Once put in place, some of these devices cannot be removed from the outside, preventing school staff and first responders from entering, and violating current building and fire codes. In several school shootings, the assailants have barricaded doors and delayed law enforcement response – which may have increased the number of casualties; after the shootings at Virginia Tech, Platte Canyon High School, and the West Nickel Mines Amish Schoolhouse, emergency responders publicly discussed their difficulties in accessing the barricaded classrooms.

Code-compliant locksets are readily available which meet the requirements for egress, accessibility, and fire protection, and provide the necessary level of security. In fact, The Final Report of the Sandy Hook Advisory Commission states:

“ The testimony and other evidence presented to the Commission reveals that there has never been an event in which an active shooter breached a locked classroom door. ”





Model Codes & Standards:

Although a few states have passed laws allowing classroom barricade devices, most states have adopted one or more of these recognized model codes: NFPA 101 – The Life Safety Code, the International Building Code, or the International Fire Code. States also adopt accessibility standards to ensure compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act – a federal law that protects the rights of people with disabilities. These codes and standards require classroom door hardware to meet the following requirements:

- Classroom doors must unlatch with one releasing operation (all locks and latches simultaneously), and releasing hardware must be mounted between 34 inches and 48 inches above the floor.
- Hardware must be operable without tight grasping, pinching, or twisting of the wrist, and without the use of a key, tool, special knowledge, or effort for egress.
- Locked doors must be able to be unlocked from the outside with a key, credential, or other approved means, to ensure that staff and emergency responders can enter the room.

NFPA 3000 – Standard for an Active Shooter / Hostile Event Response (ASHER) Program was created to help organizations and communities organize, manage, and sustain an active shooter / hostile event response program. Guidelines include planning for, responding to, and recovering from these events. The standard requires emergency action plans to include evacuation, relocation, and secure-in-place procedures and requires security hardware on egress doors to meet the requirements of NFPA 101 – The Life Safety Code.

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 children. If a property owner has violated a code, law, or regulation, that violation can usually 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 US. 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 child safety is at stake.

Additional School Safety & Security Resources:

- [Secure Schools Alliance](#)
- [Partner Alliance for Safer Schools - Guidelines for School Security](#)
- [National Association of State Fire Marshals - Classroom Door Security and Locking Hardware](#)
- [National Fire Protection Association – NFPA 3000](#)
- [LockDontBlock.org](#)
- [Safe and Sound Schools](#)
- [National Association of School Resource Officers](#)
- [Security Industry Association](#)
- [iDigHardware.com/Schools](#)

Other Classroom Security Considerations:

- Immediate notification of a hostile event provides added time to secure classrooms, cover door lights and sidelights, 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.

About the Secure Schools Alliance

The Secure Schools Alliance and Secure Schools Research and Education are taking a leadership role in launching a national conversation about the issue of school safety and advocating a course of action for addressing it. This convening of education, industry, public safety, law enforcement, corporate and community leaders will work together to ensure the security of our nation's schools through federal and state policy, legislation, research, pilot programs and the promotion of best practices. The goal is to improve the security infrastructure, security technology and life safety systems of all public K-12 schools.