



State of Utah

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## Utah Department of Public Safety

KEITH D. SQUIRES  
*Commissioner*

### Utah State Fire Marshal

COY D. PORTER  
*State Fire Marshal*

April 8, 2016

Karen Peterson  
Loss Control Consultant, Life Safety  
Division of Risk Management  
PO Box 141321  
5120 State Office Building  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-1321

Re: Emergency locks for classroom doors

Dear Karen:

Thank you for your interest in code compliance in schools wanting to use special locking devices to secure classrooms in an active shooter situation and the use of magnetic strips to hold classroom door latches open to minimize disruption in a classroom. Over the last several months our office has been approached by private companies and schools asking for approval of special locking devices to be used in case of an active shooter in the school or other school incursion. These devices hold a wedge under the door with a pin into the floor, or hold the door closure closed with a wedge over the closure, or place a metal bar across the door, or similar device. These devices override the normal operation of the door by holding the door closed to both ingress and egress. These devices are designed to prevent entry into a space or room by a perpetrator. The 2012 edition of the International Fire Code, as adopted by the Utah State Legislature as law, requires that "exit doors shall be readily openable from the egress side without the use of a key or special knowledge or effort" (Section 1008.1.9), and "the unlatching of any door or leaf shall not require more than one operation" (Section 1008.1.9.5.) These special locking devices do not meet the requirements of the code, are not approved, and shall not be used in any school, college, university, state owned or operated building, or any building under the jurisdiction of the Utah State Fire Prevention Board.

There are three primary concerns with these devices: First, these devices restrict egress from a given space or room as required by code. Second, these devices inhibit rescue from a given space or room locking rescue personnel out. Third, these devices potentially create an abuse or "rape room" where perpetrators can lock victims into a room preventing the victims escape and rescue cannot reach the victim.

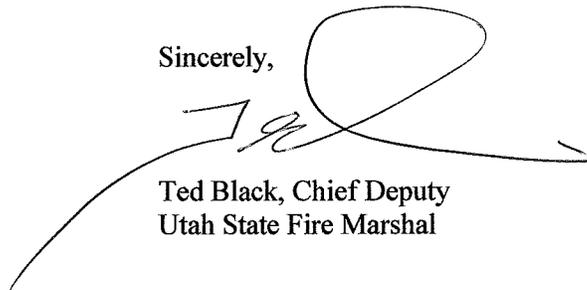
Although none of these special locking devices are approved, there are listed and approved locks and latches that can be installed on exit doors from classrooms and similar spaces. These locks and

latches can deadbolt the door and allow key entry into the room, while still allowing exit from the room with one motion to unlock and unlatch the door. Those interested in improving safety within their facility by changing locks and latches should first choose locks and latches that have a UL or FM listing. After choosing a listed device and before purchase and/or installation, submit the information on the device to the State Fire Marshal's office for approval. Changes to the egress system of any school, college, university, state owned or operated building, or any building under the jurisdiction of the Utah State Fire Prevention Board shall not be done without first obtaining approval from the State Fire Marshal's office.

The State Fire Marshal's office has also been asked about magnets used to hold the latch on a classroom door open to allow students to come and go from a classroom minimizing class disruption. These magnets are not approved. The use of these magnets voids the listing on the door assembly. If these doors open into a rated corridor the magnet voids the rating of the corridor. To my knowledge there are not any listed devices that will hold the latch open and maintain the listing on a rated corridor and/or a listed door assembly.

I have attached a position paper by the National Association of Fire Marshals, and a portion of the Final Report of the Sandy Hook Advisory Commission. Both of these papers address exiting from a classroom. These papers support the requirements of the International Fire Code and our office on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ted Black', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Ted Black, Chief Deputy  
Utah State Fire Marshal

Attachments: Nation Association of Fire Marshal's; Classroom Door Security and Locking Hardware.  
Final Report of the Sandy Hook Advisory Commission; Pages 56-57

cc: Coy Porter; Utah State Fire Marshal