



The Tennessee State Fire Marshal's Office (SFMO) recognizes that fire safety is only one element to consider when creating safe schools in Tennessee and that local education officials and agencies must comprehensively address all risks to ensure the safety of students, teachers and administrators. In an effort to assist local educators the SFMO is offering the following guidance.

The SFMO inspectors will enforce the provisions of the adopted codes based on their observations during an inspection. If a classroom door or means of egress is obstructed at the time of inspection, the inspector will require the obstruction to be removed immediately. Any alterations to classroom doors must comply with adopted codes. Inspectors will not issue citations for barricade devices that are not attached to the door or not deployed at the time of inspection. If there is evidence that a barricade device is used for purposes other than security drills or lockdowns, the inspector will note this as a deficiency.

The SFMO encourages local education officials to consult with their local first responders, including fire officials and law enforcement officials, to review the emergency action plans for all educational facilities.

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\*Tenn. Code Ann. § 68-120-101 gives the State Fire Marshal the authority to establish building standards for state buildings, educational occupancies and occupancies requiring an inspection by the State Fire Marshal for initial licensure. The Department of Education requires that each school have an annual fire safety inspection based on the fire safety inspection checklist developed by the State Fire Marshal pursuant to Tenn. Comp. R. & Regs. 0520-01-04-.01(2)(a).

\*Local building and fire code officials having jurisdiction to conduct school inspections may follow the same guidance; however, adopted codes and rules allow local officials having jurisdiction to enforce more stringent requirements.

\*The SFMO asks that school officials be mindful of the fire and life safety code and accessibility requirements including, but not limited to, the following:

- Self-closing doors shall swing easily and freely and be equipped with a closing device to cause the door to close and latch each time it is opened. *2010 NFPA 80 6.1.4.2.1*

- The unlocking and unlatching from the classroom side of the door can be accomplished without the use of a key, tool, or special knowledge or effort. *2018 NFPA 101 15.2.2.2.4 (2)*
- The releasing mechanism for unlocking and unlatching shall be located at a height not less than 34 in. (865 mm) and not exceeding 48 in. (1220 mm) above the finished floor. Alternative designs, products or technologies may be used, provided they result in substantially equivalent or greater accessibility and usability. *2018 NFPA 101 15.2.2.2.4 (3)*
- Locks, if remotely engaged, shall be unlockable from the classroom side of the door without the use of a key, tool, or special knowledge or effort. *2018 NFPA 101 15.2.2.2.4 (4)*
- The door shall be capable of being unlocked and opened from outside the room with the necessary key or other credential. *2018 NFPA 101 15.2.2.2.4 (5)*
- The locking means shall not modify the door closer, panic hardware, or fire exit hardware. *2018 NFPA 101 15.2.2.2.4 (6)*
- Modifications to a fire door and fire door assemblies, including door hardware, shall be in accordance with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 80: Standard for Fire Doors and Other Opening Protectives (2010). *2018 NFPA 101 15.2.2.2.4 (7)*
- The emergency action plan shall address the use of the locking and unlocking means from within and outside the room. *2018 NFPA 101 15.2.2.2.4 (8)*
- Staff shall be drilled in the engagement and release of the locking means, from within and outside the room, as part of the emergency egress drills. *2018 NFPA 101 15.2.2.2.4 (9)*

**If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact the SFMO's Codes Enforcement Section at (615) 741-7190.**