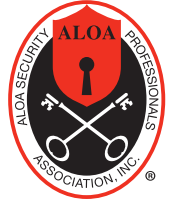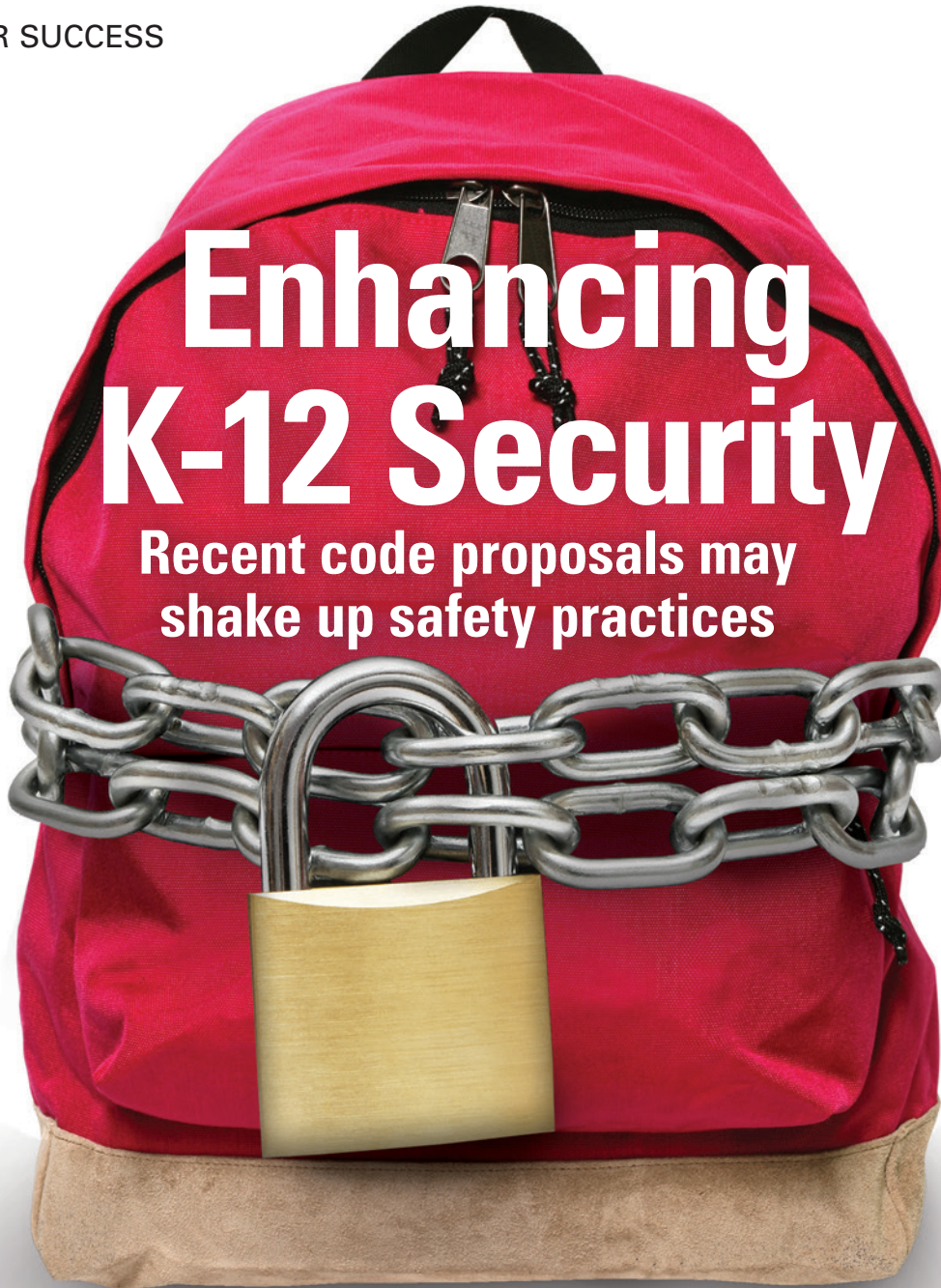October 2016

KEYNOTES

SECURING YOUR SUCCESS

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Recent code proposals may shake up safety practices

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Enhancing
K-12 SECURITY

Recent code proposals and a few best practices can help students stay safe during emergencies.
By Lori Greene, DAHC/ CDC, CCPR, FDAI, FDHI

DESPITE THE DRAMATIC ADVANCES IN CONSTRUC-tion, technological tools and safety protocols that have been made in the past two decades, this progress is not always evident in many of our nation's K-12 buildings. Too often, the much-needed funding for upgrades — including security improvements — is deferred in favor of other capital requirements.

But emergency situations can't be postponed until the next fiscal year or fundraiser. School officials and administrators should be encouraged to consult with security professionals and begin the process of evaluating their existing interior and perimeter security measures and protocols to develop a proactive strategy to keep students and faculty safe in the event of emergency.

Mechanical lockdown   Remote lockdown   Centralized lockdown

There are many products on the market that can assist with classroom security and egress issues. Recent code change proposals might effect schools' selections to enhance safety.

Interior Security

It's an unfortunate reality that the catalyst for school administrators to prioritize security measures is often a major tragedy such as an active shooter event. Reactionary security planning in the wake of these events has resulted in several states rushing to approve the installation and use of barricade devices in classrooms, ignoring both existing codes and the warnings of fire marshals and other code officials. Many of these devices are not code compliant and could actually prohibit egress and endanger the life safety of the school's occupants in the event of an emergency.

Fortunately, a change has recently been approved for the International Building Code that will require all locking devices used on classroom doors to allow safe evacuation as well as access for school staff and emergency responders.

1010.1.4.4 Locking arrangements in educational occupancies. In Group E and Group B educational occupancies, egress doors from classrooms, offices and other occupied rooms shall be permitted to be provided with locking arrangements designed to keep intruders from entering the room where all of the following conditions are met:

1. The door shall be capable of being un-locked from outside the room with a key or other approved means.
2. The door shall be openable from within the room in accordance with Section 1010.1.9.
3. Modifications shall not be made to listed panic hardware, fire door hardware or door closers.

1010.1.4.4.1 Remote operation of locks. Remote operation of locks complying with Section 1010.1.4.4 shall be permitted.

The key points in this code change are:

- This language applies to K-12 schools, colleges and universities.
- The locking requirements apply to classrooms and also to offices and other occupied rooms.
- If the rooms are lockable, **they must be able to be unlocked from the outside.**
- Locks are not required, but if locks are used, the doors have to meet the requirements for egress: one operation to unlatch, no key/tool/special knowledge/effort, no tight grasping/pinching/twisting, etc.
- Listed panic hardware, fire door hardware and door closers may not be modified.
- Remote operation is acceptable if the locks meet the other requirements of this section.

Of course, in addition to the challenge of keeping intruders out, many schools also struggle to prevent the elopement of young children and students with special needs. Although "NFPA 101: Life Safety Code" currently allows the use of delayed egress locks in educational and day care occupancies, the International Building Code (IBC) does not, so the most restrictive hardware that would be compliant with the IBC is an exit alarm.

To address this issue and give schools another option for deterring egress, the BHMA Codes & Government Affairs Committee and the International Code Council's (ICC) Building Code Action Committee both submitted code change proposals for the 2018 IBC. These proposals would allow delayed egress locks to be used in educational occupancies if the building is equipped throughout with an automatic sprinkler system or approved automatic smoke or heat detection system. Proposal E68-15 was approved by the ICC committee and will be incorporated into the 2018 edition of the IBC. In that edition, educational occupancies will be listed as one of the use groups where delayed egress locks can be used without the restriction on occupant load.

While it will be some time before both of these codes are adopted, they will go

a long way toward establishing a consistent approach to classroom security nationwide. Jurisdictions are encouraged to adopt this approved code language ahead of the local adoption of the complete code, rather than to create language that will be inconsistent with other locations.

Perimeter Security

In addition to improving internal security measures, school officials and administrators should be encouraged to implement the following best practices for enhancing their perimeter security. These measures will help to prevent unauthorized access and ultimately create a safer learning environment.

1. Establish a single point of entry for school hours. This is preferably a front-door location that is easily seen and supervised to provide more control over who should — and shouldn't — enter the building. The main entrance should be clearly marked by signage with directions to a visitor management center.

2. Create a vestibule to manage visitor entry. Many schools create a vestibule at the main entrance to provide an additional layer for perimeter security. The design automatically funnels visitors into a main office before granting them access to other parts of the building. It's important to consider accessibility and egress requirements for these doors as well as security.

3. Install electronic access control. Access control systems have become an increasingly popular way to enable the lockdown of a facility in the case of an emergency. When implemented properly, the access control software can centrally manage user authorization and monitor all doors.

> **In addition to the challenge of keeping intruders out, many schools also struggle to prevent the elopement of young children and students with special needs.**

4. Install institutional-grade products. Schools environments are subject to high levels of wear and tear, and it's important to make investments in products and solutions that are built to withstand abuse. Every opening should be built with institutional-grade doors, frames and door hardware, as properly functioning openings are key to successful security management.

5. Ensure that all other points of entry are secure at all times. Unsecured doors have the potential to allow two types of events to occur unnoticed: either an uninvited guest entering or a student exiting. Often, an entry point becomes compromised when a teacher or student props it open for the sake of

convenience. Sensors are available that alert staff via an audible alarm when a door isn't secure, and door status switches notify access control or monitoring systems of any issues.

6. Develop a lockdown strategy. It's been proven that lockdowns save lives. Students who were locked down in their classrooms at Sandy Hook Elementary School survived. All schools should have the tools in place to lock down immediately if an emergency arises. There are three proven lockdown technologies:
- **Manual lockdown** uses mechanically locking hardware to lock down a space. This is an economical option but relies upon an individual having the right key in hand and being at the right opening during a lockdown situation.
- **Remote lockdown** enables classroom lockdown by remote fob within proximity of door and is a cost-effective alternative to a networked system.
- **Centralized lockdown, a** networked system, can enable immediate school or campus-wide lockdown when integrated with access control software.

7. Train and drill all staff on policies, procedures and technologies. For security solutions to perform at their best, school staff must be fully trained on policies, procedures and technologies. Faculty and staff, including substitute teachers, must be thoroughly familiar with the school's panic alarms and interoperable communication systems if these tools are to be used effectively. Training and drills must be consistent and repetitive; one time isn't enough to ensure proper execution during a real emergency. Another key point is to ensure that policies and procedures are not viewed as suggestions or optional — to be successful, they must be mandatory.

Conclusion

One bright spot in the discussion of how to make schools safer is the fact that overall rates of school violence are falling. According to the latest study by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), between 1992 and 2014, the total victimization rate at public schools declined 82 percent. That's a significant decline, and although the report didn't cite any specific cause for the falling crime rates, it did note that the percentages of public schools reporting the use of various safety and security measures has been steadily increasing over the last 15 years. While the report doesn't directly link the two, it will seem obvious to anyone in the security or architectural hardware industry that improving access control and security results in a safer school environment.

But, although the rates are falling, there's a still a great deal of work that needs to be done. School administrators, parents and teachers are all relying on this industry to provide the necessary training and solutions that are essential to providing a positive, safe learning environment for future generations of students. ✏

Lori Greene, DAHC/CDC, CCPR, FDAI, FDHI is the manager of codes and resources for Allegion. For more information about this topic and to download a free reference guide on codes, visit iDigHardware.com/guide.