

## Experts Speak Out Regarding Classroom Security

NASFM is certainly aware of the need to protect our schools and businesses from senseless acts of violence, however we feel strongly we must carefully consider the solutions being proposed around the country. Some **of the proposed or implemented solutions specifically affecting classroom doors, while well intended, may compromise aspects of life safety.** NASFM's guidelines for Classroom Door Security and Locking Hardware draws attention to important requirements that new and existing classroom doors unlatch with one operation in order to ensure free and immediate egress. **Classroom doors are also required to meet Federal accessibility laws and building and fire code requirements which include the ability to operate door hardware with no tight grasping, tight pinching, or twisting of the wrist.**

**Butch Browning, President - National Association of State Fire Marshals**

You don't have to sacrifice life safety for security. You don't have to destroy fire codes or violate laws that help the disabled to protect vulnerable populations. You won't save money by using inappropriate products, when affordable solutions that meet codes and laws exist; you only expose yourself to new liabilities. **It is irresponsible for anyone to make it difficult to flee a hazardous situation. It is equally irresponsible to allow the use of locking devices that could be deployed as barricades by someone seeking to do harm to others.** Schools house our most vulnerable population, our children, and their safety should be first.

**Robert Boyd, Executive Director - Secure Schools Alliance**

Many door security devices, once employed, do not allow for quick and unimpeded egress. **There may be circumstances during a lockdown emergency where it will be necessary to quickly exit the classroom or building, including:**

- **Fire set by an assailant**
- **Explosive device detonated by an assailant**
- **Gas leak initiated by an assailant**
- **Hazardous/toxic material introduced by an assailant**
- **An assailant entering or firing a weapon through an exterior window**

Additionally, if a teacher or staff member were to become incapacitated for any reason, the children (especially the younger ones) may be incapable of removing the security device.

**Minnesota State Fire Marshal Division - Security & Barricade Devices on Classroom Doors**

**During unannounced drills that I conducted during my career as a firefighter and fire prevention officer of 30+ years, I have seen many people who are normally without any impairments fail to complete the simplest tasks.** Adrenaline released when you feel a threat may give you strength and give you speed; it will not give you the ability to do simple math, or solve any sort of complex problem. You hear people describe incidents like they happened in slow motion. You lose your peripheral vision and hearing. In short, you may be strong and fast but you also become blind and stupid. **The last thing you need is a door that requires more than one action to open. If two actions made a classroom door safer, I'd be all for it, but it doesn't - it makes it less safe.**

**Michael W Schroeder, Fire Prevention Officer- Retired - City of Madison Fire Department**

**Having proper locks installed on classroom doors is one of the most important deployments in school safety.** Locksets with a latch bolt that can be operated from both sides is paramount, with the ability for the corridor side to be unlocked with a key while the inside lever always operates the latch in a simple manner. This capability is a measure that helps the teachers to concentrate on teaching and the students to concentrate on learning. When the worst happens, this allows the staff and students to help protect themselves.

**Guy Grace, Director of Security and Emergency Planning - Littleton Public Schools**

**Many of the retrofit locking 'gadgets' being marketed seem more likely to be used as a bludgeon in a routine classroom fight, or to be lost, misplaced, or stolen, and unavailable during an attack.** They require the person installing the item to be in front of the door, the most likely target of an attacker trying to gain entry. Simply keeping the classroom door locked is a best practice that can delay or deter an attacker from entering a room, as well as playing a key daily role in controlling unwanted access to a classroom in order to reduce theft and inappropriate activity by unsupervised students.

**Donald R. Green, CPP, Safety & Security Manager - Chesterfield County Public Schools**

The final report of the Sandy Hook Advisory Commission (2015) includes many recommendations for school safety, including Recommendation #1 – classroom doors should be lockable from inside the classroom. The report 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."** There are other factors to consider, such as impact-resistance of glass adjacent to door hardware, distribution of keys to all staff including substitute teachers, methods of securing exterior doors, visitor protocols, and procedures, training, and drills. Barricading of doors is not mentioned in the commission's report.

**Partner Alliance for Safer Schools, Position Statement on Classroom Barricade Device**