Department of Licensing & Regulatory Affairs
Bureau of Fire Services
Fire Marshal Bulletin – 15

K-12 Classroom Door Latch Devices Violates School Fire Safety Rules

During a fire, the corridor system acts as a vital component in getting students and staff safely and quickly out of the building. Doors that open into the corridor are required to be positive latching. Positive latching keeps the door closed if there is a fire in the room and protects the corridor from smoke.

The Bureau of Fire Services has seen an increase in the use of devices such as magnetic strips, magnets with clips and magnetic plates that prevent a classroom door to the corridor from latching when closed. These magnetic devices are placed on the door frame at or near the strike plate to keep the door from latching.

The intent of the magnetic device is to allow the door hardware to remain locked while the door can still be used to enter and exit the classroom. When the door should to be locked (i.e. lock-down security situation), the device is removed so that the door latches and remains locked. While the concept has merit from a security standpoint, placing magnets or other devices that circumvent the positive latching of the corridor doors is a violation of the New and Existing School, College, and University Fire Safety Administrative Rules (School Fire Safety Rules), which adopt NFPA 101 1997 Edition with amendments promulgated under Public Act 207 of 1941.

> ***Sections 10-3.6.1 and 11-3.6.1 require corridor walls to be constructed of fire barriers that have not less than a 1-hour fire resistance rating, with some exceptions for older buildings. All corridor walls regardless of age of the building are required to resist the passage of smoke and shall be constructed to be reasonably smoke tight.***

To meet this requirement, doors in the corridor walls have to latch secure into the door frame when the doors are closed to prevent fire and smoke from entering the corridor system, preventing the corridor to be used for evacuation in the event of a fire.

The Bureau of Fire Services is concerned about the security of our students and teachers in our schools and will continue to work with schools to provide solutions that will provide security while maintaining fire safety. Refer to Fire Marshal Bulletin 2 – Fire, Tornado and Lock Down Drills for more specifics regarding classroom barricade devices. Certain barricade devices, with proper training and installation, can be used during lock-down emergencies and lock-down drills.