

## Magnetic Door Strips and Other Door Obstructions

**Magnetic door strips** designed to slip between a doorway and the locking bolt **may be a fire hazard** and are being reviewed by the state Fire Marshal. When a building area is not sprinklered and there is a fire, the door closing and latching properly keeps the fire and heat from rushing into other rooms. This allows time for occupants of rooms to escape through exterior doors and windows.

**Vulnerability: Magnetic door strips** often are used in areas that can create threat potentials. Staff have placed these on exterior doors so that the doors are easy to enter when they come back to their room from outside the building. This allows an **intruder** to easily enter the building and sometimes these items are left in place leaving the building unsecured for a long period of time.

**Students planning on doing harm** can use these items to create an easy entry point for later use. A parent could request a student put tape or magnetic strips on exterior doors while planning a **custodial interference** situation.

**Note:** The **magnetic door strips** prohibit doors from closing and latching properly. If you have these in your building, review the use of these magnets with your area Fire Marshal or inspector (**This is a Public Safety Team discussion topic**).

**Vulnerability:** If there were **magnetic door strips** at various locations, these items keep classroom doors from securing properly.

**Note:** The issues labeled in this document are potential harmful situations and liability concerns.

**Suggestion:** Remove these items.

### Other fire code and safety concern items that are Fire Marshal discussion topics:

Does the school have **door chocks**?

Does the school have **sliding barrel-bolt locks**?

Does the school have **installed door stops**?

Does the school have **door hasp locks**?

Does the school have **dead bolts**?

Does the school have **hook and eye locks**?

Does the school have **any other type of locks** related to fire code?

**Vulnerability:** If a school has the **night lock system** installed at the bottom of interior doors and they are in a lockdown mode, there is the potential of the night lock system jamming when attempting to release the unit from the lock position. This occurs due to wear, swelling of doors or jams, and potentially other reasons.

**Head bands to hold doors open, or from latching, is a fire hazard** and possible **fire code violation**. This is the same as the **magnetic strips**.

Does the school have **head bands or other items holding doors open**?

**Vulnerability:** Some schools have interior classroom keys that hang near the interior top of the doors and are keyed only for that classroom interior door lock. This option can give quick access to the key to secure the door during threat situations. Students or others could take these keys.

**Vulnerability:** Teachers wearing these keys on a lanyard with their I.D. badges could safeguard the keys. Handling a key and completing the lock function can be difficult when persons are in fear or in a hurry.

**Note:** When teachers leave their classrooms secured when unattended they safeguard personal belongings, classroom equipment from theft or use as weapons. This also mitigates the possibility of students from being injured while in a classroom while a staff member is not present. Carrying their classroom keys on a lanyard with their identification badge is recommended.

**Note:** Many doors in school buildings do not have locks, or they are keyed on one side with no lock mechanism on the other side. This limits options to secure areas safely during an immediate threat situation.

**Suggestion:** Install **push button locks** on all interior side hallway classroom and office egress handles. This will create a reliable and fast function for securing the doors from inside these rooms. An **interior push button function** to secure the door can be a faster option for lockdown purposes. This also allows for classrooms doors to remain shut, minimizing hallway noise while teaching, and easy access from students and staff when there is no threat situation reported. **(This is a Public Safety Team discussion topic.)**

**Option:** Work with a **Fire System Company** to **install magnetic holds** for hallway classroom and office doors that are released by activating a **panic button system** that is linked to the fire alarm system. This type of system does not activate the fire alarm but does allow for these doors to remain in the locked position. Once released, the doors should secure when closed with properly working door closure arms.

**Option:** Master keyed doors will allow public safety during threat situations to reach persons in the building faster.

**Note:** Many teachers in schools have placed coverings on door windows. This is a solid practice for crisis response as it limits the view from the hallway into the classroom.

**Note:** Doors with glass windows allow visibility into the classroom. Curtains or magnetic removable covers would be recommended for crisis response purposes. These windows often do not have security-rated glass, and if broken, would allow an easy reach to the egress door handle inside the classroom.

**Extremely Vulnerable Area:** Teachers who have classrooms with exterior doors should not be allowed to keep the doors open or unsecured during the school day. Rocks, bricks, or other items left outside exterior doors create an easy method for entry by a perpetrator.

**Exterior classroom doors** create two problems:

**One:** If these doors are left unsecured, instead of one main access control point at the main entrance, now there are multiple control access points creating a very unsafe accountability for security reasons.

**Two:** These exterior classroom doors do not usually have security-rated glass and can be easily entered by breaking the windows currently in place. This allows a perpetrator to reach in and push down on the inside door handle, or in on a panic bar, giving the perpetrator immediate access to the building. **(For exterior classroom doors, see the Security Safety Audit reports provided by VSBIT with suggestions and options for strengthening doors for security reasons.)**

**Vulnerability:** Feedback during some of my visits was that exterior classroom doors have been found propped open creating potential immediate access to the interior of the building by an intruder, animals, or other unwanted situation.

**Suggestion:** If **rocks, bricks, headbands, or similar items** are found by doors, remove these items immediately. Rocks or similar items can be trip and fall hazards, used by intruders as weapons, or used as an entry tool.

**Option:** Install **exterior pass card units** for staff quick access when a threat is announced and teachers are teaching at the exterior near their rooms.

**Option:** The locations of these doors could be clearly marked on floor plan maps.

**Note:** Sometimes teachers and students do leave the exterior classroom doors open from time to time. **(This would be a security concern.)**

**Suggestion:** Staff secure the exterior of open doors using situational awareness techniques. Never leave unsecured exterior doors unattended, this defeats all access control procedures used at the main entrance. If appropriate for the situation, move to the interior, secure these doors when a potential threat is observed, and immediately use the schools alert warning procedures.

**Vulnerability:** Reaching into the interior panic bar could be possible, especially if the glass is not security-rated or does not have properly installed security-rated window film on the glass.

**Option:** Install **metal plates** on the inside and over the lower half of the exterior door windows. This may be an inexpensive way of protecting the interior egress handle's function from an intruder trying to gain access from the exterior.

**Option:** Install **Security-rated window film** properly bonded to the window frames of all existing main entrance and access point doors and side glass. **(See access control and other areas of the Security Safety Audit reports provided by VSBIT.)**

**Resource:** Doug Bergstrom is the owner of **Xtreme Grafix LLC** located at 4768 Georgia Shore Road, St. Albans, Vermont. Doug's number is 802-527 5023. Doug has installed 3M Security-rated window film that was properly bonded to the window and door frames of the access points for some Vermont schools. I have spoken with Doug and learned that Doug's business has the Vermont contract with 3M to install their Ultra Security-rated window film and bonding process. They can also install frosting on glass to block views into sensitive areas of schools.

For further information concerning a Security Safety Audit, contact me through the information below:

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