



Evidence-Based Safety and Security

Decisions Regarding Classroom Barricade Devices

Each school tragedy seems to reignite the conversation regarding the use of classroom door barricade devices (non-code-compliant blocking devices). These devices provide a false perception of safety. Here are some facts about why using classroom door barricade devices is dangerous:

Evacuation. Vital fire and life safety codes have been developed over decades, often based on lessons learned from tragedies.

Classroom door barricade devices can prevent children from being able to evacuate during an emergency, including a fire.

Emergency Response. Door barricade devices can make it challenging, or even impossible, for responders to access the room quickly if there is an assailant inside or if someone needs medical attention. In these critical situations, every second counts. If emergency responders cannot enter quickly, lives could be at risk.

Accessibility. Untrained students, teachers, people with disabilities, and community groups utilizing the school building may not be familiar with the operation of barricade devices or may have difficulty using devices that do not comply with federal ADA law. This not only negates any safety features but could also result in performance issues that lead to deadly consequences.

Safety for everyone, in every situation, every day.

All students, educators, staff, and visitors, regardless of age or ability, deserve to be safe in a school building. There are many ways to improve school safety and security without using door barricade devices. For more information on classroom door barricade devices, please visit PASSK12.org.

About Us

PASS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization comprised of parents, educators, law enforcement, and security professionals with the sole purpose of improving school safety. It is our mission to provide schools with information, tools, and insight to enhance school safety.

FACTS

In past school shootings, doors secured with chains, barricades, or secondary door-blocking measures have **delayed emergency responders.**

Fires and medical emergencies occur far more frequently than active shooter incidents, **making rapid egress and responder access critical to life safety.**



PASS
Partner Alliance
for Safer Schools

Barricade devices delay authorized entry.

Evidence from after-action reports and investigations shows that secondary barricade or door-blocking devices can delay law enforcement and emergency responder entry even after officers arrive at the correct location. Delays occur when responders are unaware that such devices exist, are not trained to disengage them, or require special tools or non-intuitive actions to override them. In active-threat events, these delays directly affect survivability and the ability to render timely aid.¹

Barricades have been used to trap victims and slow rescue.

Documented incidents show that door-blocking measures have impeded rescue efforts and, in some cases, were deliberately exploited by attackers. During the 2021 Oxford High School shooting, aftermarket barricade devices installed throughout the building caused repeated entry delays for responding officers. Access to occupied rooms required locating specialized tools and learning device operation during the incident, resulting in delays of multiple minutes, including at a classroom where a teacher had been shot.²

In the 2018 Capital Gazette shooting, the attacker intentionally used a door-blocking device to secure an exit before beginning the assault. Investigators determined the device was part of the attacker's pre-planning and was used to slow law enforcement entry and restrict occupant escape.³

Similarly, during the Virginia Tech shooting in 2007, the attacker chained multiple doors from the inside, preventing escape and delaying police access. Officers were unable to immediately breach the barricaded entrances, extending the duration of harm.⁴

Barricade devices can be weaponized or misused.

When anyone inside a room can unilaterally block entry, a capability is introduced that can be misused or weaponized. Attackers may use barricades to trap victims, while students may use them to lock teachers out of classrooms or isolate individuals during assaults, bullying, or behavioral crises. This risk exists regardless of intent and does not exist with code-compliant classroom locking hardware that preserves free egress and authorized corridor-side access.

Barricades increase risk in non-shooter emergencies.

Schools experience fires, medical emergencies, and other crises far more frequently than active-assailant events. National fire data shows thousands of school fires each year during occupied hours. Devices that require special knowledge, tools, multiple motions, or that obstruct doors and closers can delay evacuation and rescue during these more common emergencies, undermining long-standing life-safety principles.⁵

¹⁻² Guidepost Solutions. Oakland County Independent After-Action Report: Oxford High School Shooting. Oakland County, MI.

³ State of Maryland v. Ramos, Capital Gazette Shooting, trial testimony and investigative reporting (2018–2019).

⁴ Virginia Tech Review Panel. Mass Shootings at Virginia Tech: Add. to the Report of the Review Panel. Commonwealth of Virginia, 2009.

⁵ National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). School Building Fires and U.S. Fire Incident Data.