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RE: Alert: Classroom Door Latch Devices in Violation of Fire Safety Rules

Dear School Administrator:

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 types of devices are placed on the door frame at or near the strike plate to keep the door from latching. These devices are intended to permit a door to be maintained in a locked condition at all times but still allow the occupants to use the door without the use of a key. When the door is needed to be locked such as in a lock-down condition, the device is removed so that the door latches and remains locked. The intent of the device is to allow the door hardware to remain locked while the door can still be used to enter and exit the classroom. While the concept has merit from a security standpoint, the use of such devices is a violation of the School Fire Safety Rules.



The intent of this letter is to advise you that these devices are in violation of the New and Existing School, College and University Fire Safety Rules which adopt NFPA 101 1997 edition with Michigan 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.

Thank you
Bureau of Fire Services