

A Warning About Door Barricade Devices



Last year we stopped accepting advertising or sponsorships from door barricade device vendors. We did this because most door barricade products pose the following risks:

- » Most door barricade devices on the market violate the Americans with Disability Act, (ADA) as well as National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) codes.
- » They could prevent individuals with disabilities from evacuating a building during an emergency, such as a fire.

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- » Under some circumstances, even persons who don't have any disabilities could be prevented from evacuating a building during an emergency when these products are used.
- » They could be used by criminals to trap students, teachers and other individuals inside a classroom.
- » Barricade devices only address one issue: assailants with weapons, such as guns and knives, so the campuses investing in these devices aren't getting the most “bang for their buck.” It's wise to adopt solutions that address a multitude of risks. For example, access control and ADA and NFPA-compliant locks and door hardware not only keep out an active shooter (by the way, the chances of a student being killed by an active shooter are extremely small), they help prevent vandalism and theft (which happen much more frequently than active shooter attacks).
- » Barricade devices present significant liability exposures.

I'm covering this topic again because, despite the many warnings *Campus Safety* has published about the risks associated with barricade devices, some organizations are still buying them. One school district just spent \$63,000 on 251 classroom door barricade devices at a cost of \$250 each.

I doubt any professional who fully understands the ADA and NFPA codes, as well as the problems I've described above, would recommend such a purchase.

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, let me remind all of you again that before your school, college or healthcare facility (or any other type of organization, for that matter) invests in any security solution, you should obtain guidance and support from vetted and qualified consultants, systems integrators, engineers and other vendors who know what they are talking about.

For the most part (although not always), these professionals should have experience working with your type of campus or organization. The expert should also have experience in dealing with the particular issue your campus wants addressed. For example, a school district or university wanting to be able to quickly lockdown classroom doors should consult with a professional who fully understands the ADA and NFPA codes so the facility is following the law and is adequately protected during an active assailant event.

Doing so will ensure your organization spends its precious and limited resources wisely and only installs products that are safe.

Truth be told, every security and public safety solution, training and policy — even if it is ADA- and NFPA-code compliant — carries with it some risk. But why any organization would invest in a solution like door barricade devices that are widely known to have so many more vulnerabilities than other products that are code-compliant is beyond me. **CS**

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