



Five Minutes to *Fire Safety*

Topic: Propping Doors Open II

Last week's edition of "Five Minutes to Fire Safety" explored the question of whether or not classroom doors can be propped open. What we learned was that fire-rated doors have an important function during fires, and that in order to work they must be closed. We also learned that they can be held open by magnetic hold-open devices that are tied to the fire alarm system. This way the doors will close and latch when the fire alarm system is activated and the separation protection will be in place. We also learned how to tell whether a door or interior window bears a fire rating.

What about non-rated classroom doors?

Since that separation was not designed or required by the architect or building codes, these doors can be propped open – but only when the room is occupied. Unoccupied rooms must still have closed doors. Although the doors do not provide rated separation within the building, they still act to limit the spread of fire and the products of combustion and they aid the fire suppression effort.

This also means that wedges and doorstops can be used to block open non-rated doors - as long as the room is occupied. If your classroom has non-rated doors, get in the habit of always closing the door behind you when you leave the room. This way, you don't have to worry about whether or not the room is occupied or unoccupied - the door is getting closed whenever you leave the room.

Is this confusing? It can be, especially in older schools with recent additions. It's not uncommon to find a school where part of the building has no fire-rated corridors and the classroom doors can be propped open, and just around the corner is a newer addition with a rated corridor – where the doors can not be propped open. In schools like this, administrators may choose to require all doors be kept closed in the interest of equity.

As always, if you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact our office.



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