

Life Safety *Essentials*

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The Essential Life Safety Training Opportunity for Health Care Organizations



EXIT DOORS - RELEASING MECHANISM

Learning Objective: To understand that exit doors shall be operable with not more than one releasing operation.

The exit door is one of the most essential elements of the means of egress. Yet it is not uncommon to find such doors modified with additional security devices and releasing mechanisms as shown in the example pictured left. Regardless of the occupancy classification, doors in the means of egress must comply with Chapter 7 of NFPA 101®, Life Safety Code®. When evaluating the exit door consider these references from Chapter 7.

Section 7.2.1.5.1 states, “Doors shall be arranged to be opened readily from the egress side whenever the building is occupied. Locks, if provided, shall not require the use of a key, a tool, or special knowledge or effort for operation from the egress side.” In the example shown we can easily determine that special effort is required to exit the building. Even though there are four exceptions to this section, none are applicable to the example shown.

While Section 7.2.1.5.4* requires the latch or other fastening device on a door to be provided with a releasing device having an obvious method of operation with the releasing mechanism for any latch shall be located not less than 34 inches, and not more than 48 inches above the finished floor, the most important consideration of this lesson is that “Doors shall be operable with not more than one releasing operation.”

Where security is a concern and additional precautions must be taken to prohibit unwanted entry, consult security professionals for appropriate devices that comply with the applicable provisions of the Life Safety Code®. Remember that improper exit devices can lead to tragic consequences.