



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF CONSTRUCTION SERVICES
OFFICE OF STATE FIRE MARSHAL



December 20, 2012

To: Local Fire Marshals

From: Robert J. Ross
STATE FIRE MARSHAL

Re: *SCHOOL SECURITY QUESTIONS*

Many local fire marshals have been contacting our office for guidance related to school safety. We are sending the following information to assist you. We also ask that you share it with your local school officials.

Fire Exit & Crisis Response Drills

Back in 2000 as a result of several highly publicized school shootings, the Connecticut State Legislature amended CT General Statute §10-231 to allow local and regional boards of education to substitute crisis response drills for the monthly fire drills required by the statute. These crisis response drills have been shown to be beneficial during both severe weather and terrorism events. Many times these crisis response drills involve a “lock-down” of the school. Planning for such drills should include local educators, law enforcement and emergency responders so that everyone understands the goal of the drill. Remember that the goals of a crisis response drill significantly differ from that of the Emergency Egress and Relocation Drills required by Section 20.2.3.1 our State Fire Prevention Code. When developing the school safety plan, fire exit and crisis response drills should not present conflicting information to students and staff.

Securing School Buildings

Many school systems are taking extra ordinary steps to secure their building against unauthorized entry. At the outset, this may not appear to be an issue. However if the doors are also locked to prevent egress in any type of emergency, this is not only a violation of Connecticut's fire safety regulations, but poses a greater degree of danger than controlling unauthorized entry. Also remember that egress doors may only have one operation to release the door for egress, thus the use of passage hardware in conjunction with deadbolts is not permitted unless both can be released in one motion. Hardware of this type is commonly found on the doors to hotel rooms. Interior courtyards also pose a problem for school security. When occupied, they are treated like a room within the building and emergency egress must be provided. We are developing alternatives to this requirement for when the space is unoccupied which will maintain building security.

I am also including a link on the FEMA web site to a document produced by the US Department of Homeland Security dealing with the Design of Safe Schools. This document contains a lot of information that may assist your community in providing for safety within your local schools.

http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/st/bips07_428_schools.pdf

As always, the staff of the Office of State Fire Marshal remains available to assist you with any code related issues that you may encounter.