Barricade vs Door Locking Device - There is a Difference.

In the state of Ohio, there is increased discussion relating to door locking devices and building codes. This was triggered when the Ohio Board of Building Appeals ruled against the use of the Barracuda Intruder Defense System (door locking device) on February 23, 2015. Previously, the Ohio Attorneys Generals, School Safety Task Force Report recommends that building occupants “barricade” in certain active shooter situations.

The Ohio Board of Building Appeals ruling deemed that these type of devices meet the definitions of door locking devices (egress locks) without meeting applicable building codes. All of the devices in question can be described as (i) only working with a hinged door and (ii) locks the door in a closed position.

An examination of the building & fire codes demonstrates that the words barricade and door locking device have two different definitions. Anything considered to be a door locking device, is subject to governance by fire & building codes and typically includes an approval processes. Barricades, on the other hand, are only minimally subject to the same codes.

ALICE has always taught the principles of barricading. For clarity, ALICE puts forth the following chart and definitions to differentiate between a barricade and a door locking device.
**Barricade**: bar·ri·cade: An improvised structure set up, as across a route of access, to obstruct the passage of an enemy or opponent. An usually temporary structure set up to restrict or control the movement of people.¹

ALICE offers the following guidance as it applies to barricades and barricading:

1. **The fire code definition of 'barricade' is based on the dictionary definition.** The fire code looks to the dictionary to define the ordinary accepted meaning for those words not otherwise defined in the code². This includes the term “barricade.” Additionally, the fire code includes a section titled “Barricades” that provides contextual use confirming the ordinary accepted meaning is proper including statements like, “…fire chief is authorized to place ropes, guards, barricades or other obstructions across any street…to prevent interference…”³

2. **A 'barricade’ can be constructed without the use of a Door.** A barricade can function without a door or even if an existing door has been defeated. Building occupants can barricade: rooms without doors; rooms without door locks; rooms with door locks; or even hallways or passageways. This allows any school the ability to slow a violent intruder’s entry into a room, regardless of the age of the building or construction of the room entrances.

3. **‘Barricading’ does not require Fine Motor Skills.** The moving of furniture (e.g., file cabinets, desks, chairs) to barricade is a gross motor skill and uses items and concepts available to everyone. It does not require special knowledge or dexterity that is contemplated by some codes or required by some door locking devices.

4. **A 'barricade’ does Not Impact the Fire Rating of a Door.** Barricading can be accomplished in ways that do not affect a door, if present, and therefore will not void door ratings and warranties.

5. **Classroom/office furniture used to erect a 'barricade’ is not governed by Code.** Classroom or workspace contents (e.g., desks, cabinets, chairs) are not governed by the fire and building code since their primary purpose is unrelated to safety. This is analogous to a fire marshal’s advice to place a wet towel at the base of a door during a fire. Even though the towel serves a critical role in keeping smoke out of a room (like a barricade to an active shooter), the fire code does not attempt to govern the use of a towel.

6. **‘Barricade’ removal is governed by the Fire Code.** If a barricade were deemed to be improperly constructed the fire code can intervene. Specifically, “…The fire code official, upon finding any obstructions in aisles, passageways or other means of egress, shall be authorized to cause the event to be stopped until such condition or obstruction is corrected.”⁴

7. **‘Barricading’ does not require a Financial Investment.** Barricades can be achieved using items typically contained in a classroom or workspace and therefore not require a cash outlay.

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² 2015 International Fire Code, Section 201.4
³ 2015 International Fire Code, Section 104.11.1.
⁴ 2015 International Fire Code, Section 107.6
**Lockset or Door Locking Device (Egress Lock):** A set of hardware for shutting or locking a door.\(^5\) By definition, a Door Locking Device requires a door in order to work whereby the definition of barricade does not require a door.

ALICE offers the following guidance as it applies to Locksets and Door Locking Devices (egress lock):

1. **Door Locking Devices are subject to Approval.** According to the fire code, “Security devices affecting means of egress shall be subject to approval of the fire code official.”\(^6\) Ensure that any application of a door locking device is not in violation of the fire code. A door locking device accepted by one Fire Marshal may be rejected by another jurisdiction. Some Fire Marshals have exercised discretion by issuing special variances but rarely do these variances include permanently mounted door locking devices.

2. **Understand what makes door Locking Devices Code Compliant.** Code compliant Door Locking Devices can be summarized as: having a mounting height of 34"-48" AFF; requiring no tools, special knowledge or effort to operating; requiring no tight grasping, tight pinching, twisting of the wrist; and the requirement for the door to be unlatched with one operation. Please reference the most current version of the International Fire Code, International Building Code and NFPA 101 for more information.

3. **Door locking devices have been defeated by Active Shooters.** A March 2005 active shooter event at Red Lake High School in Red Lake, MN demonstrated how easy it was for a student killer to make entry through multiple locked classroom doors Seven were killed including a security guard and a teacher.\(^7\) A locked door used in conjunction with a barricade will further delay entry into a room.

4. **Unintended (Inappropriate) Use.** Door locking devices may play to the advantage of a violent intruder by easily enabling them to secure themselves inside a room with potential victims. Door locking devices allow this to be done quickly and easily unnoticed. Once in place, removing a device may not be known by those not trained on the device.

5. **Several Door Locking Devices require Fine Motor Skills.** Several devices in the marketplace require fine motor skills to actuate. This includes the coordination of small muscle movements usually involving the synchronization of hands and fingers with the eyes. Under stress, studies have shown that fine motor skills can degrade as the heart rate increases.

6. **Egress Locks and Door Locking Devices may impact the Fire Rating of a Door.** Locks, latches and some door locking devices may require attachment to a door that can affect the fire rating and warranties. Fire doors modified for new hardware are limited by the requirements of NFPA 80 including drill hole diameters\(^8\).

\(^6\) International Fire Code, Section 1031.2.1
\(^8\) NFPA 80, Section 4.1.3.1