

	CITY OF AUSTIN FIRE DEPARTMENT-FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE FIRE PROTECTION ENGINEERING SECTION	
	AFD Clarification on Locking Requirements for Stairway Doors	
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This document is intended to provide design professionals the most recent Austin Fire Department (AFD) clarification of the below referenced standard section related to locking requirements for interior stairway means of egress doors.

REFERENCES

International Building Code (IBC) – 2021 Edition, Section 1010.2.7, as amended by the City of Austin
 International Fire Code (IFC) – 2021 Edition, Section 508.1.6, as amended by the City of Austin

BASIC REQUIREMENTS

The Amended 2021 IBC, Section 1010.2.7, Exception #3, states that ‘In stairways serving two stories or greater in a building not classified as a high-rise by Section 403 (*High-Rise Buildings*), doors are permitted to be locked from the side opposite the egress side, provided they are openable from the egress side. The exit doors shall be capable of being unlocked simultaneously without unlatching upon a signal from an approved fire department key switch. The key switch shall be located at the exterior opening of the stair or at the main entrance to the building.’

AFD has determined that a fire department override switch is the best practice for meeting the intent of the code and keeps with firefighting and rescue operating procedures, while maintaining security and safety of the building during normal building operation. The following items shall be provided:

1. A fire department security override switch that consists of a toggle switch, inside of a Knox Key Box, where the stairway means of egress doors are locked from the side opposite of egress.
2. The Knox Box containing the toggle switch shall be located on the exterior of the building, next to each stairway exit discharge door that contains access controls.

3. When activated, the switch shall simultaneously unlock, without unlatching, all stairway means of egress doors throughout the building.
4. Signage with the words “Fire Dept. Security Override” shall be permanently mounted above the switch. The required signage shall be mounted not more than 6 inches above the Knox Key Box. It shall be constructed out of durable, all-weather materials, with white letters, not less than 1 inch in height, on a red background.

High-rise buildings shall meet the requirements of the Amended 2021 IFC Section 508.1.6, Item #7, which states the following: ‘Controls for unlocking stairway doors simultaneously. Stairways doors shall be physically unlocked by UL listed fire alarm system components. The unlocking means shall be a red light switch mounted on the wall in the command room with appropriate signage or other approved method.’

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