Time-out/seclusion rooms

Effective August 1, 2011, Minnesota Statute 125A.0942, Subd. 3(6)(i) mandates that a school using a room for seclusion receive “written notice from local authorities that the room and the locking mechanisms comply with applicable building, fire, and safety codes” before using a room for seclusion. Seclusion is defined as “confining a child alone in a room from which egress is barred.” Minn. Stat. 125A.0941(f).

For additional information or questions please review our web site at www.fire.state.mn.us or contact the State Fire Marshal Division school inspector for your region.

The following summarizes the Minnesota State Fire Code requirements in section 1008.1.10 – 1008.1.10.5 for special locking arrangements used for seclusion rooms:

1) Must unlock with automatic sprinkler system activation (This requires an electrical interconnect between the seclusion room lock and the fire sprinkler water flow device via the fire alarm panel.)
2) Unlock with activation of any automatic fire detection device (This requires an electrical interconnect between the seclusion room lock and the fire alarm system; this also requires that fire detection devices such as smoke detectors be interconnected to the fire alarm system.)
3) Unlock with activation of fire alarm system (This requires an electrical interconnect between the seclusion room lock and the fire alarm system.)
4) Unlock with loss of power to the lock or the fire alarm system (This requires the lock to not be powered through the emergency back-up battery supply of the fire alarm system or other back-up power systems.)
5) Unlock with activation of the fire alarm trouble signal
6) Locking devices must fail in the unlocked position (This requires that the seclusion room lock be designed that if anything is not working appropriately, the lock must unlock and stay unlocked.)
7) When automatically unlocked, the lock must be designed to only re-lock by manual means (This requires that the lock can not automatically relock.)
8) The room or area must be protected with quick response sprinklers (Sprinklers must be verified to be the quick response type.)
9) The room or area and the space between the room and an outside exit door shall be protected with automatic smoke detection connected to a fire alarm system (This
allows for early detection of a fire in the exit path from the seclusion room to the closest outside exit.)

10) The room must be constructed of non-combustible materials having a minimum of one-hour fire rating (This could be 5/8” thick gypsum on both sides of a metal stud wall, masonry block wall or other substantial type construction. For seclusion rooms the walls do not need to extend to the ceiling.)

11) Room doors must swing in direction of exit travel and have a fire rating of at least 20 minutes (Door could be wood or metal; must be substantial to be equivalent to 20 minute rating.)

12) Interior finish in the time-out room for both walls and ceilings must be at least Class C (III) (This could be gypsum, masonry, natural or treated wood.)

13) Special locking arrangements must be tested monthly (The seclusion room lock must be tested monthly with the fire alarm and other interconnects to ensure the lock releases when required and stays released. The sprinkler system interconnect is checked annually with the sprinkler system test.)