



MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
State Fire Marshal Division

STATEMENT OF POLICY

Policy #: INS ED – 01 (2007)	Subject of Policy: Use of Courtyards in Schools	
Reviewed and Approved By: Jerry Rosendahl	Title: State Fire Marshal	Revised Date: July 10, 2007

APPLIES TO:

State Fire Marshal Inspection Personnel

PURPOSE:

To provide guidance on egress requirements for existing courtyards in existing schools.

POLICY:

Section I – Courtyards 2,500 Square Feet or More in Size

Courtyards in existing school buildings that are 2,500 square feet or more in size and are used by students must be provided with two (2) or more exits. In addition, these courtyards must have egress doors that:

1. Swing in the direction of egress travel,
2. Have exit signage,
3. Are equipped with panic hardware, and
4. Are not locked from the egress (courtyard) side.

Section II – Courtyards Less Than 2,500 Square Feet in Size

Courtyards in existing school buildings that do not exceed 2,500 square feet and are used by students are allowed to have a single exit. This exit can have key-locking hardware on both sides of the door as long as the following criteria are met:

1. All areas of the courtyard must be visible from the door or windows serving the courtyard.
2. School staff must supervise all activities during the use of the courtyard.
3. Staff must be trained to properly exit the courtyard in the event of an emergency. The school’s emergency plan must address evacuation of the courtyard.
4. Doors must remain unlocked when the courtyard is in use.
5. Staff supervising the courtyard must have key/keys for all locks to the courtyard.
6. The school maintenance staff and the head Administrator of the building must have a key for these locks.
7. Doors must remain locked when not in use.
8. The local fire official must be aware of the courtyard’s use.

Section III – Courtyards Not Used by Students

Courtyards in existing schools that are never used for student occupancy (i.e. used only by staff for maintenance purposes) are allowed to be locked with double-keyed dead bolt locks.

Rationale:

Courtyards are used in existing school buildings. The existing codes give no clear guidance on establishing an occupant load for these areas. Since no occupant load is given, the State Fire Marshal Division will assign an occupant load factor of 50 square feet per person (see MSFC (07) Table 1004.1.1 – “Schools – Shops/Vocational or Exercise” category).

Larger courtyards need some additional protection, as the number of occupants can be high. Reasonable safeguards and the limited use of smaller courtyards allow them to have key-locking hardware. Smaller courtyards that will not be used in accordance Section II will need to have doors without key-locking hardware.