

Office of Facilities Planning Newsletter #61 – March 2005

Awning Rescue Windows:

We have recently discovered some buildings are utilizing awning windows as rescue windows where the awning windows are not compliant. We need to clarify. Awning windows can be used as rescue windows, but compliance can be more difficult. Our exception to this issue is, that generally certain types of awning windows do not allow for the minimum clearance dimensions for rescue windows requirements. Therefore, the second means of egress from student occupied spaces as required by the Manual of Planning Standards is not being met.

The minimum requirements for rescue windows are, a minimum clear opening dimension of 24 inches and a total clear opening area of 6 square feet. Measure the width of the opening and the projected clear opening from the open window to the window's sill. Not the height. The window must stay open in that position. The use of a non-permanently attached rod or strap to hold the window open is not acceptable. The window cannot have operating rods that infringe on the clear opening, for example, residential type crank-out hardware. In one of the instances we observed most of the windows were very difficult to operate and some could not be held open at all. In three of the districts where this issue was pointed out to us the awning rescue windows were non-compliant, yet the buildings passed the annual fire safety inspections and had received certificates of occupancy. This is extremely troubling to us.

It must be remembered that the purpose of the rescue window is to allow fire department personnel to rescue occupants that may be trapped in a burning building. Awning windows make it difficult to correctly place ladders. The overhead restriction caused by the window in the open position makes it all the more difficult to rescue the occupants. School districts need to be certain that **all** of their rescue windows are fully compliant and operable.

"Panic" Hardware vs. "Fire Bolt" Hardware:

Recently it has come to our attention that there has been some inappropriate use of "Panic and Fire Bolt Hardware". While both look and operate the same, there are two major differences between the two. First and foremost, "Fire Bolt" hardware has an UL listing and a fire rating for use in fire and smoke barriers. The second difference is much more subtle. "Fire Bolt" hardware will not have a dogging device. This is a device that can be activated to keep the latching mechanism retracted and prevent the door from latching in the closed position. The access to this mechanism is usually a small hole located in the faceplate just behind the actuating bar and it is activated by the use of an Allen wrench. While "Fire Bolt" hardware may be used in place of "Panic" hardware, the reverse is not true. With rare exceptions, "Panic" hardware may not be used on fire and smoke barrier doors. The reason being that fire and smoke barrier doors must close and latch under fire alarm condition. Therefore, there must be nothing to keep a fire or smoke door from latching in the closed position.

Please, check all of your doors in fire and smoke barriers for the proper hardware. If you find any of the latching devices being held in the retracted position, then you have the improper hardware on the door and it must be replaced. This should be found as a fire safety violation on the next Annual Fire Safety Inspection.

Window Cleaning Safety Devices:

In our effort to update the Manual of Planning Standards, we provided the specific requirements for Window Cleaning Safety Devices. This is required from the Department of Labor, Title 12 NYCRR, Part 21 and referenced on our Evaluation of Existing Building Form for capital projects.

- a. The provisions of this section apply to buildings 3 stories or higher.

Exception: Shall not apply to any building three stories or less in height in cities, towns or villages having a population of less than forty thousand.

- b. Persons engaged in window cleaning shall be protected. Windows shall be cleaned from approved safe surfaces, windowsills or ledges, ladders, boatswains' chairs, or scaffolds.
- c. A safe surface is where the cleaner is working not over 6 feet off the floor (or grade) and not over 3 feet above a stair run.
- d. Ladders may be used generally when the top of the window is not over 35 feet above grade (or floor).
- e. Windowsills and ledges may be used when the window openings are provided with approved anchors for use with safety belts.
- f. Approved boatswains chairs and scaffold also may be used.

Please, each school district should consult their insurance carrier regarding this type of equipment.

Truss Identification Regulations:

There is a new regulation requiring the identification of all trusses in buildings. This does include schools and it affects all trusses of all material types. It applies to new buildings and additions to existing buildings. The regulation specifies sign shape, location, and placement requirements on the building. The sign must include the classification and the truss types as specified in the regulation.

The new Truss Identification Regulations are found in Title 19 NYCRR, Part 1264. The title of the regulation is "Identification of Buildings Utilizing Truss Type Construction", and it went into effect on 12/29/04. There is no "phase in" period. Therefore this should be applied to construction projects that are being built right now. Please take a look at the regulation. The text of the regulation can be found on the DOS website at <http://www.dos.state.ny.us/code/trussID.htm>. Incidentally, as you read this regulation, please be aware that we are the Authority Having Jurisdiction and we are NOT collecting any \$50 fees.

An Index of our Newsletters is available on our web site at <https://www.p12.nysed.gov/facplan/NewsLetters.htm>.

If you would like to have this Newsletter sent directly to you by e-mail, please send your e-mail address to Joe Levy at jlevy@mail.nysed.gov

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