



METROPOLITAN FIRE MARSHALS ASSOCIATION

January 25, 2019

Metropolitan Fire Marshal's Association School Safety Position

The following position statement is the result of an Ad-Hoc committee of the Metropolitan Fire Marshals Association. It was brought to the floor at a regularly scheduled meeting, where it was discussed and put to a consensus vote. The vote was overwhelmingly in agreement with the contents of this position statement.

The Metropolitan Fire Marshal's Association takes all aspects of occupant safety seriously and believes that code-compliant solutions are imperative for any identified occupant hazard, however any single hazard cannot be weighted to the complete disregard of all others. The code, including the *International Fire Code* and all relevant NFPA standards, already establishes requirements or exemptions for various life safety systems based on building construction type, size and use. Schools vary greatly in size and construction type with varying degrees of life safety systems installed and therefore, no single regional solution will likely exist. Intruder scenarios are just one of many hazards to building occupants, but a hazard that has been increasingly contemplated by international consensus and can be mitigated within the most current codes. Schools containing modern fire alarm systems and full fire sprinkler systems will have the greatest flexibility within the code. Where such systems are not installed, schools will have the fewest options available. Hazards can be dynamic with new hazards emerging in established facilities but the appropriate mitigation of an emerging hazard does not absolve fire authorities and educational administrations from liabilities incurred as a result of failing to follow adopted codes.

Installation and maintenance of modern life safety systems afford the greatest flexibility in the code while maintaining responsible levels of occupant safety from numerous hazards. While calls for removal, modification or delay of life safety systems are readily suggested by well-intentioned parties, they do so by weighting a single hazard disproportionately over other hazards without regard to the significant liability created to others in doing so. Any organizational position that allows for life safety systems to be removed, altered or delayed in such a manner as to no longer be code-compliant places considerable liability on the fire authority and code enforcement personnel. Where such modifications are deemed acceptable and necessary by the fire authority,

the code must be clearly amended to relieve the personal liability of the code enforcement personnel, however no amendment releases the fire authority from organizational liability for failure to exercise sound judgment and due diligence for occupant safety. In the event of any tragedy, both our actions and inactions will be heavily scrutinized by peers and the legal system against internationally accepted code and life safety criteria.

In summary, the 2018 Edition of the International Fire Code, or newer, already contemplates and accommodates intruder protection issues. Bringing fire code officials to the table from the outset for any intruder risk assessment and mitigation discussions is crucial. For any school, addressing intruder issues from a fire code perspective is a case-specific process that is dependent on the specific educational building's characteristics and its life safety systems. Failing to adhere to codes as adopted places the fire agency and code enforcement personnel in a position of considerable liability. We remain eager to participate in any process for finding and implementing code-compliant solutions for school safety in any jurisdiction.

The Metropolitan Fire Marshals Association is a branch of the Greater St. Louis Area Fire Chiefs Association, and a Chapter of the International Code Council. The mission statement of the Association states: "The purpose of this Association shall be that of education and keeping the members informed of fire prevention problems as they relate to the safeguarding of life, property and public welfare by discussing methods of solving such problems."

Signed

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Roger N. Herin".

Roger N. Herin, MCP
President