



# Disabling of Doors on Campus

## **Policy Statement**

At the State University of New York at Potsdam, maintaining the safety and security of our campus community is a top priority. As part of our ongoing commitment to fire and life safety, the use of unauthorized devices to disable doors, including those items commonly referred to as door chocks, is strictly prohibited. Door chocks, wedges, or any other unauthorized devices that prop open doors pose a significant threat to the safety of our students, faculty, staff, and visitors. Furthermore, wedging doors open can also interfere with security protocols, allowing unauthorized access to restricted areas and compromising the safety of campus facilities.

In addition to the serious safety risks, the improper use of door chocks causes physical damage to doors, frames, and hinges. Over time, the constant pressure from these devices weakens the structural integrity of the doors, resulting in costly repairs or the need for full replacement. Replacing fire doors, which are engineered and rated for safety, or specialty doors can be a significant financial burden on the campus. Proper maintenance and use of these doors are essential to avoid unnecessary expenses that divert funds from other critical areas. Exceptions may be approved when operations require the use of a temporary door chock. Only campus issued door chocks may be used. This exception does not apply to fire doors.

## **Purpose**

This policy outlines the prohibition of disabling doors on campus. It emphasizes the importance of keeping doors fully operational and the consequences of improper use in terms of fire safety and physical damage to the doors and their components.

## **Applicability**

This policy applies to all SUNY Potsdam faculty, staff, students, PACES employees, Research Foundation employees, contractors, and visitors. This policy applies to all doors on campus.

## **Definitions**

**Fire Door** - A fire-rated door designed to prevent the spread of fire and smoke between compartments in a building. Fire doors are usually constructed from materials such as steel or fire-resistant wood and are equipped with fire-rated hardware. They are required to remain closed and latched during a fire to maintain their effectiveness.



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**Smoke Door** - A door specifically designed to prevent the passage of smoke from one compartment to another. Smoke doors may not have the same fire-resistance rating as fire doors but are essential for controlling smoke, which is often the primary cause of fatalities in a fire.

**Door Chock** - A device, typically a wedge or rubber stop, used to hold a door in an open position. The use of door chocks to disable or prop open fire doors is prohibited due to fire safety regulations, as it interferes with the intended function of the door.

**Automatic Closing Device** - A mechanism installed on a door that automatically closes the door when triggered by fire or smoke detection systems. These devices ensure that fire doors and smoke doors return to a closed position in an emergency, even if they were propped open during normal operation.

**Self-Closing Door** - A door that is equipped with a spring or hydraulic closer to automatically shut after being opened. Self-closing fire and smoke doors help maintain fire barriers and prevent the spread of fire or smoke when not in use.

**Latch** - A device that secures a door in a closed position, ensuring it stays closed during an emergency. Fire-rated doors must be equipped with a functional latch to maintain their fire-resistance rating.

**Fire Door Assembly** - The complete set of components that make up a fire door system, including the door, frame, hinges, latches, and any associated hardware. The entire assembly must meet fire-resistance ratings and comply with safety codes.

**Fire Code** - A set of rules and standards established by local, state, or national authorities that regulate fire safety measures in buildings. The Fire Code of New York State applies to college campuses and specifies the requirements for fire and smoke doors.

**Egress** - The safe and accessible path of exit from a building in an emergency. Fire and smoke doors play a crucial role in maintaining clear egress routes by controlling the spread of fire and smoke.



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## **Background**

Fire Code Compliance:

Propping open fire doors is a direct violation of the Fire Code of New York State (Section 703.2.2), which requires fire doors to remain closed and fully functional at all times unless held open by an approved automatic system, such as an electromagnetic release connected to the fire alarm system. Non-compliance with this code subjects the campus to fines and potential legal action.

Financial Impact:

The improper use of door chocks causes physical damage to doors, frames, and hinges. Over time, the constant pressure from these devices weakens the structural integrity of the doors, resulting in costly repairs or the need for full replacement. Replacing fire doors, which are engineered and rated for safety, can be a significant financial burden on the university. Proper maintenance and use of these doors are essential to avoid unnecessary expenses that divert funds from other critical areas. The chocking of fire and smoke doors may lead to significant fines from the New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control.

## **Prohibited Devices**

Devices prohibited under this policy include, but are not limited to:

- Door chocks
- Wedges (Of any material)
- Any object placed under a door or between the door and the frame that impedes its normal operation.

## **Authorized Devices**

The only authorized means of propping a fire door open is through the use of a self-closing door equipped with an automatic closing device (e.g. Magnetic door holder). For non-fire rated doors, exceptions may be approved when operations require the use of a temporary door chock. Only campus issued door chocks may be used. This exception does not apply to fire doors.



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For all doors other than fire doors a request may be approved to have a permanent door holder installed. These requests should be made through the [work order system](#).

## Enforcement:

The Office of Environmental Health, Safety, & Emergency Management and the New York State of Fire Prevention & Control will regularly inspect fire doors for compliance. Violators may be subject to disciplinary action, referred to the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards, and/or face fines as outlined within state law.

## Conclusion

Fire & smoke doors play a vital role in safeguarding lives and property. Ensuring these doors remain functional and unobstructed is the responsibility of everyone on campus. Compliance with this policy helps protect the campus community and ensures the longevity of the campus's fire protection infrastructure.

For questions or concerns regarding this policy, please contact the Office of Environmental Health & Safety by emailing [safety@potsdam.edu](mailto:safety@potsdam.edu).

Role	Individual/Group	Contact Information
Comply with	All College staff	n/a
Policy Executor(s)	Patrick O'Brien – Director of Environmental Health, Safety, & Emergency Management	(315) 267-2596 <a href="mailto:obrienpm@potsdam.edu">obrienpm@potsdam.edu</a>

## Change History

Date	Change History
October 30, 2024	New Policy

**Effective Date:** October 30, 2024

**Approved by President's Council:** October 30, 2024



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