



NIH Division of the Fire Marshal

Administrative Interpretation 17-2

Inactive Fire Doors

Code reference: NFPA 80 (2016), para. 5.1.6 requires that inactive fire doors be removed and their openings infilled with fire rated wall construction. NFPA 101 and the IBC require many walls to have a higher hourly rating than fire doors because doors in use are not expected to have combustible materials in close proximity.

Background: Frequent renovations at NIH make it advantageous to retain inactive doors installed for possible future use. This interpretation is intended to provide equivalency to NFPA 80 without impairing emergency operations.

Interpretation: An inactive fire door that is not required for means of egress may be retained under the following alternatives. Exit signs directing occupants to doors no longer required for means of egress must be removed or completely covered.

Alternative for all NIH-owned facilities:

- Remove the door hardware entirely and cover hole(s); and,
- Cover the door with a layer of 5/8" drywall fastened to the outside of the door frame.

Alternative ONLY for NIEHS-owned facilities at Research Triangle Park, NC:

- NIEHS Health and Safety Branch approves and enforces user's interior layout with limited combustibles in close proximity;
- Remove the door hardware entirely and cover hole(s); and
- Install a "DOOR BLOCKED" sign on the outside of the door (so emergency responders do not mistake it as a way to gain entry).

Supersedes: N/A

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