



NIH Division of the Fire Marshal

Administrative Interpretation 17-5

Laboratory Doors

Code reference: NFPA 45 (2015) and NFPA 101 (2015)

Background: NFPA 45 requires certain laboratory doors to be fire-rated; NFPA 101 requires fire-rated doors to be kept closed & latched at all times to be effective. NFPA 45 also contains a safety requirement (p. 7.3.3) that labs be kept at a negative pressure relative to corridors, which generally necessitates closed doors. It is recognized that doors must be held open for short periods of time for certain procedures such as moving equipment and carts. Outlined below are the conditions under which lab doors in corridor walls may be temporarily held open, while providing a reasonable level of safety and preventing damage to doors.

Interpretation:

1. Manual doors may be held open under **all** of the following conditions **only** during transfer of equipment or carts as necessary to conduct research:

- Staff remain at the door, or within sight of it, to ensure it is closed during emergencies
- Hazardous activities within a lab are halted while its door is held open
- Doors may only be held open when a lab is attended
- Chocking must be done only under the bottom of the door to prevent damage
- Chocks shall be removed promptly after transfer is completed
- Installed door stops are prohibited

2. Powered doors in accordance with NFPA 101, section 7.2.1.9 are an acceptable alternative where the above provisions cannot be met. They shall not be chocked open.

3. Automatic-closing doors in accordance with NFPA 101, section 7.2.1.8 are not acceptable for labs because they negate the negative pressure requirement.

Supersedes: N/A

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