

It's a dog eat dog world

Ever wonder about the strange terminology we use for specific construction products, especially door hardware? Twisted, I know.

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Take, for example, the term “**dogging**.” Webster Dictionary defines dogging as a transitive verb and as follows:

1. a. to hunt, track or follow like a hound
<dogging her every move>
- b. to worry as if by pursuit with dogs
<dogged by his past failures>
- c. to bother or pester persistently
<dogging him about his grades>
2. to fasten with a dog (Aha! Read on, friend...)

Dogging in Scotland refers to truancy. Wikipedia lists dogging as “the use of a mechanical device called a ‘dog’ to fasten something to something else (for example, doors, hatches, or shafts).” This is where we’re onto something, because the term dogging in the hardware world refers to the use of a mechanical device to hold a latch in a retracted position. Most commonly, dogging is a feature used in exit (or panic) devices to hold the push rail or bar in a retracted position, thus allowing a door to operate in push/pull mode without latching. Dogging can also be used on aluminum door latchsets and other latching devices, and is often referred to as a “latch holdback” feature in those applications.

Most exit devices are “dogged down” by depressing the push rail and, using a common Allen wrench inserted in a hole, turning a cam to hold the rail (and thus the latchbolt) in a retracted position. This dogging serves several functions. On a door with pull trim, it essentially locks or unlocks the door for daily use. It also subjects the exit device push bar and latch to fewer cycles, thereby extending the life of the hardware immeasurably. The door operates quietly, a valid concern if you’re specifying for a courtroom, an office, a theater, or a performing arts center.

If you think securing perimeter doors with something as simple as an Allen wrench (or hex key) sounds a bit foolish, you’d be right. That’s why **cylinder dogging** is often used on exit devices. This option requires that a key be used in a cylinder to “dog” the exit device. (See Figure 2) Whenever I’m consulting on a school project, I remind the architect that school kids love to dog down the exit devices on exterior doors late on a Friday afternoon, using an Allen key taken from their father’s toolbox. (I have no personal experience with this, of course.) This basically leaves these doors unsecured for the entire weekend. Cylinder dogging can eliminate this potential security threat.



Figure 1 – manual dogging



Figure 2 – cylinder dogging



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It is important to note that fire rated exit devices cannot be dogged manually. Fire doors are required to be self-latching, and dogging an exit device would not allow the door to latch. For that reason, fire rated exit devices have no manual means of dogging. However, there are electrical means of dogging an exit device so that, in case of a fire alarm, the device can automatically “undog” and allow the door to latch.

That’s a topic for another exciting article...

So, it really is a dog-eat-dog world out there... just don’t be caught wearing milkbone underwear!

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