

Courtyards

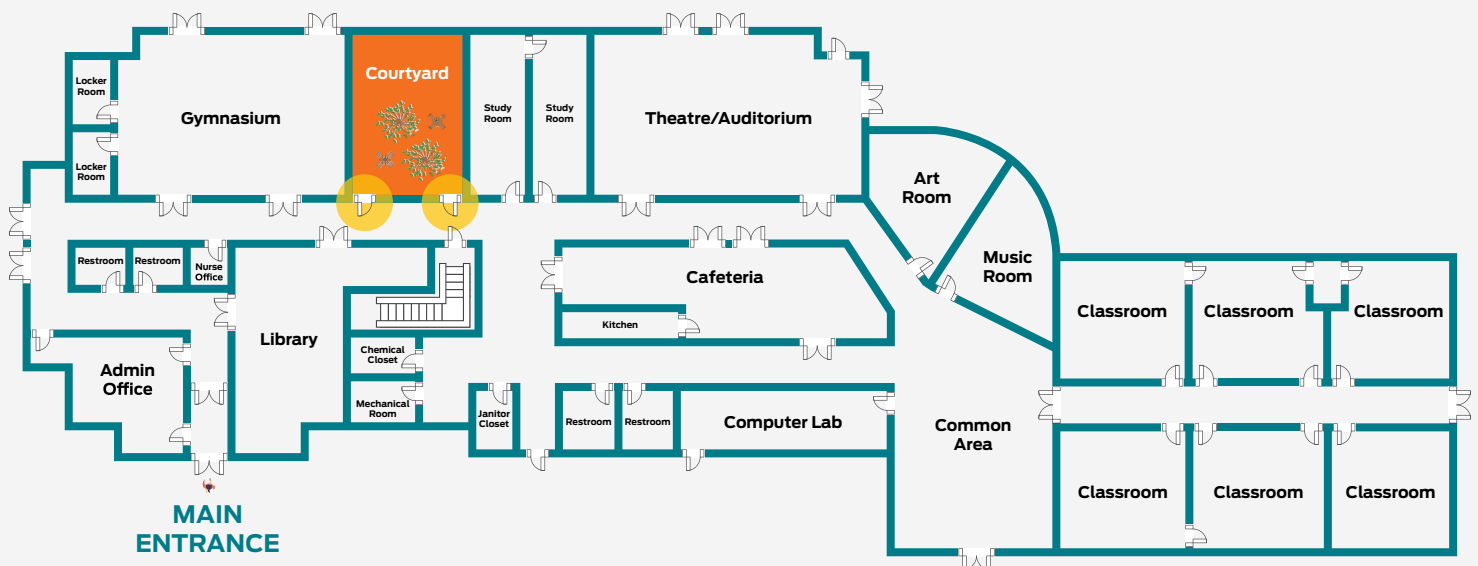
Some schools have a central enclosed courtyard to provide natural light to the interior rooms and/or to provide students a place outside to study. However, courtyards can present a security challenge, as the egress path is typically through the school, which could allow unauthorized access to the building.

A recent code change expands the options for these areas.

 **Learn best practices to secure this opening.**



Locate this opening:



Operational requirements:



Doors from the school into the enclosed courtyard can be **controlled by leaving the doors locked or unlocked**



Panic hardware is often **required on the courtyard side of the door** and may be dogged (latch retracted) to allow access from the courtyard into the school



Door is typically **locked after school hours**



Free egress from the courtyard into the school **is always available when the space is occupied**

Key considerations for securing courtyards

- If classrooms have access to the courtyard, the door to the courtyard needs to be always locked or lockable from inside the classroom.
- There should be a telephone in the courtyard for communicating with the main office in an emergency.
- Securing courtyards can vary depending on the type and usage.
 - Courtyards that are completely enclosed versus open to outside areas.
 - Number of people who can be in the courtyard at one time.
- Consult with a security or door hardware expert to choose the right solution for your specific courtyard.
- It is recommended that courtyards be monitored by staff during high traffic times.
- Don't forget the courtyard when implementing systems for duress or intrusion detection.

Code considerations:

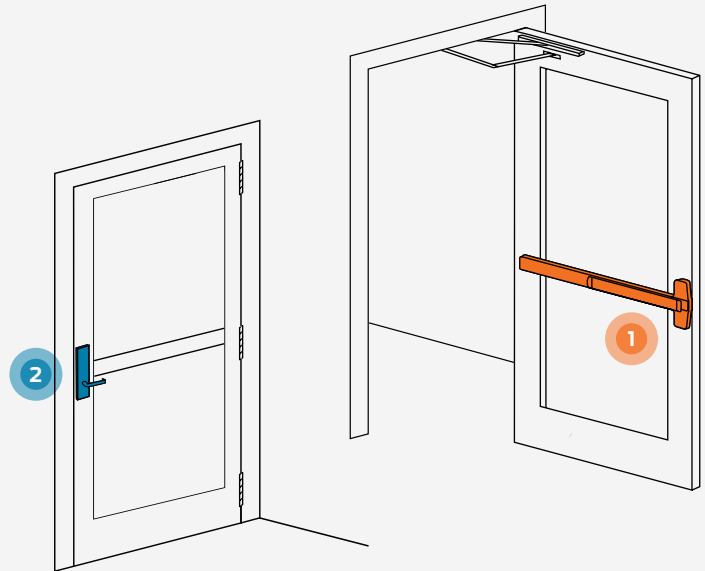
- If the enclosed courtyard is an occupiable space with a calculated occupant load of 50 people or more, the egress route will typically pass through the interior of the school, with doors swinging in the direction of egress equipped with panic hardware.
- Past editions of the model codes did not include a way to lock these doors to prevent an unauthorized person from climbing over the roof into the courtyard and accessing the school. However, the 2021 edition of the IBC includes a new section that allows these doors to be equipped with double-cylinder deadbolts if certain criteria are met.
 - The section applies to exterior areas with an occupant load of less than 300 people, and requires a telephone or two-way communication system, signage, a vision panel in the door and a key-operated lock that is readily distinguishable as locked.
- Learn more in the article, [Decoded: Egress from Exterior Spaces](#).



Product recommendations

Here are some key components to securing courtyards.

For full solutions, specifications and recommendations, **contact us**.



1



Panic hardware with cylinder dogging is recommended for courtyards. Panic hardware is required by code for areas with a calculated occupant load of 50 people or more per the International Building Code (IBC) and International Fire Code (IFC) or 100 people or more per the NFPA codes.

2



Visual indicators are recommended on doors leading to the courtyard. If a key-operated lock is installed in lieu of panic hardware, the lock must be a type that is readily distinguishable as locked. Visual indicators show a doors lock status at a glance.

Other solutions not shown in the diagram above



Since this is an outdoor space, the panic hardware should have **weep holes** for durability in inclement weather.



Door and latch bolt monitor switches alert administration when an exterior door is left open or left unlatched.



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