



## Fire Doors Can Protect You...

... if they are used properly

### Introduction

Fire-rated doors protect openings through fire-rated walls. Any time a doorway to a compartment is held open by use of an unapproved device, such as a wood wedge, or the latching hardware is bypassed by taping the latch, the fire-rated compartment is temporarily violated. To minimize the break in protection, fire doors, including the closer and latching hardware, must not be user-modified in order for the door assembly to provide as much resistance as possible to the spread of fire, smoke, and toxic gases.

### What is a fire door?

A fire door is a passive fire protection feature used within buildings to prevent the spread of fire. Fire-rated doors are certified by testing laboratories, such as Underwriters Laboratory (UL), and typically have the laboratory's certification label on the inside edge or top of the door. Below is an example of a testing laboratory's label on the inside edge of a fire door.



## Requirements

Fire-rated doors are often held open for the convenience of the employees and visitors, creating a significant fire hazard for all building occupants because of the break created in the fire wall. The California Building Code Section 715.4.7 states: “Fire rated doors must be automatic or self-closing and latching.” In common terms, this means that the fire-rated doors cannot be held open by any unapproved means, such as a wedge or string tied to the wall. Fire-rated exit doors can be held open if they are part of the building alarm system, so that they automatically release when the building fire alarm system is activated.

A fire-rated door held open during fire provides no protection to the occupants. A fire door that has been modified by the user can no longer confine smoke and fire to the area of origin, and may not provide occupants with valuable time to evacuate the building.

The pictures below are from the same fire, and clearly show the effectiveness of a fire door. With the fire-rated door closed, the interior of the room was destroyed; while the outside hallway remained clear enough for everyone to escape.



**Corridor outside the room**



**Interior of the room**

## Hazards to Avoid With Fire Doors

- Fire doors should never be tied open or held open by unapproved devices, such as door wedges or blocks;
- Even when closed, fire doors should never have tape placed over the latch. During a fire, hot gases can easily build up enough pressure to cause fire doors to blow open.

Below is an example of a fire door that is improperly held open by tying it to the wall. Fire doors can only be held open by a device that automatically releases when the fire alarm is activated (such as an electromagnetic hold open device).



If you need to have your fire door held in the open position, contact your department Safety Coordinator who can request a Facilities work order to have an electromagnetic hold open device installed. This device will need to be connected to a smoke detector and allow the door to close when the fire alarm is activated.

Please consider the implications of your actions on yourself and co-workers when you manipulate fire-rated doors within your facility. It is the intent of the Fire Department to work with University personnel to provide the highest level of personal safety in the workplace, and we appreciate your efforts in recognizing this objective.