

Know your codes: **Panic hardware**

Panic hardware is essential to fast and easy egress during an emergency. That said, it's common to see these devices installed on openings where panic hardware isn't required by code. So, when is panic hardware actually required? While there's no simple answer to this seemingly simple question, this illustration helps clarify the basics.

A recording of the webinar “Panic Hardware—When, Where and Why?” is available on demand.

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The requirements below apply to doors which lock or latch. They do not apply if a door has push/pull hardware and no lock or latch.

**International Building Code (IBC)
and International Fire Code (IFC)**

From 2006 to present, all editions require panic hardware for doors serving these use groups:

- Assembly occupancies with an occupant load of 50 people or more
- Educational occupancies with an occupant load of 50 people or more
- High Hazard occupancies with any occupant load
- Some electrical rooms¹

NFPA 101 – Life Safety Code

All recent editions require panic hardware for doors serving these occupancy classifications.

- Assembly occupancies with an occupant load of 100 people or more
- Educational occupancies with an occupant load of 100 people or more
- Day care occupancies with an occupant load of 100 people or more
- High Hazard occupancies with an occupant load of more than five people

Beyond the basics

The addition of electrified functions has led to much of the confusion surrounding panic hardware. Need information about electric latch retraction, delayed egress and controlled egress? [Check out this panic hardware guide.](#)

Looking for more information?



Intro to Door Hardware: Where is Panic Hardware Required by Code? [This video](#) describes where panic door hardware is required by code.



Back-to-basics: Panic hardware

Panic hardware, also known as an exit device (or fire exit hardware when used on fire doors), is designed to provide fast and easy egress to allow building occupants to exit safely in an emergency.

[Read more.](#)

¹ Panic hardware is also required on some rooms housing electrical equipment. The NFPA 70 – National Electrical Code references where panic hardware is required on electrical rooms, as does the IBC. It's important to refer to the IBC, NFPA 70 or other adopted code for more detailed information.