



Long-Term Care Regulatory Technical Memorandum

Number: TM 20-01 (ALF)
Title: Bedroom Door Lock
Provider Types: Assisted Living Facility (ALF)
TAC Reference: 26 TAC §553.61(b)(4)
Date Issued: June 19, 2020

1.0 Subject and Purpose

This technical memorandum (TM) provides guidance on the interpretation of, and compliance with, the requirements for using a lock on a resident bedroom door or other similar doors, as established in Texas Administrative Code, Title 26 (26 TAC) Chapter 553, Licensing Standards for Assisted Living Facilities,¹ in §553.61(b)(4).

The guidance provided in this TM cannot address every unique condition or configuration. Compliance can only be evaluated based upon the particulars and on-site conditions in each situation. This TM applies only to the provisions of 26 TAC §553.61(b)(4) that it addresses and does not constitute a substantive change to any provision of §553.61. It does not address or modify any other rule in Chapter 553, nor any other legal requirement to which an assisted living facility is subject, including requirements for approval by a local authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) for enforcement of its own standards.

Graphics included in this TM are for visual illustration only. They are not intended to show an “approved” or “recommended” condition.

2.0 Policy Details & Provider Responsibilities

This TM clarifies how a door lock that is installed on a resident bedroom door or other similar door must operate, and the difference between “residential” and “residential board and care” occupancies. It also permits a grace period

of 180 days for an ALF to correct noncompliance related to the misapplication of an exception allowed only for a lock on a bedroom door in a residential occupancy, but not in an ALF.

An ALF must comply with the applicable occupancy and general chapters in *NFPA 101, Life Safety Code* (NFPA 101),² including the requirements related to using a lock on a door.

- All new Type A facilities and small Type B facilities must comply with Chapter 32, New Residential Board and Care Occupancies.
- All existing Type A facilities and small Type B facilities must comply with Chapter 33, Existing Residential Board and Care Occupancies.
- All new Type B large facilities must comply with Chapter 18, new Health Care Occupancies.
- All existing Type B large facilities must comply with Chapter 19, existing Health Care Occupancies.

An existing facility is one that operated with a license as an ALF before January 6, 2014 and has not subsequently become unlicensed. A new facility is one that became licensed as an ALF on or after January 6, 2014.

2.1 Residential Occupancy Does Not Apply to ALF

Depending on the type and size of the ALF, an ALF must meet the requirements of either the health care or residential board and care occupancy chapter in NFPA 101. While NFPA 101 also includes a residential occupancy,³ the residential occupancy definition and related occupancy chapters do not apply to an ALF. Any exceptions permitted by NFPA 101 for a residential occupancy are not permitted at an ALF.

NFPA 101 residential occupancy chapters include the following:

- 24 – one- and two-family dwellings
- 26 – lodging or rooming houses
- 28 – new hotels and dormitories
- 29 – existing hotels and dormitories
- 30 – new apartment buildings
- 31 – existing apartment buildings

2.2 Additional Door Lock or Releasing Operation Not Permitted for a Door in an ALF

Both health care and residential board and care occupancies in NFPA 101 state that a door in the path of travel to a means of escape or egress⁴ must not be locked against egress when the building is occupied. NFPA 101 only permits certain types of door locks. Section [2.4](#) of this document describes the type of lock permitted.

There is an exception that permits an additional releasing operation for doors from individual living units and guest rooms in a **residential occupancy**. An **ALF is not a residential occupancy** and **must not** use a lock with more than one releasing operation.

If a resident in an ALF wants an additional lock on their bedroom or living unit door, it is acceptable as long as the door hardware unlocks all locks and opens with not more than one releasing operation.⁵

2.3 Correcting Noncompliance

Through external and internal stakeholder feedback, HHSC has learned that some providers and surveyors have misunderstood the definition of residential occupancy and some ALFs might have incorrectly used locks that require more than one releasing operation. An ALF that erroneously applied the exception allowing an additional releasing operation, which is permitted only in a residential occupancy, but not in an ALF, has 180 days from the publication of this document to correct the noncompliance.

2.4 Door Lock on a Resident Bedroom Door or Other Similar Door

Each ALF must ensure that a door can be readily opened from inside the room, even if the door is locked⁶. Readily opened means:

- The door latch or other fastening device⁷ has a releasing device with obvious method of operation. It must not require special knowledge or tools, such as a key.
- The releasing device is easily operated under all lighting conditions.
- The releasing device is located not less than 34 inches, and not more than 48 inches above the finished floor.

- The door is operable with not more than one releasing operation, which means turning, pushing or pulling the door hardware⁸ to unlock and open the door.

Door hardware that unlocks and opens the door with not more than one releasing operation is commonly called “single-action” hardware.

“Other similar doors” means any door in the path of travel to a means of escape or egress, including a door from other rooms such as:

- an office
- living room
- dining room
- activity room
- treatment or wellness room

3.0 Background/History

Health and Safety Code §247.0263 requires HHSC to provide “guidance on the interpretation of minimum life safety code standards” prescribed under Health and Safety Code, Chapter 247, Assisted Living Facilities, and ALF rules, in 26 TAC Chapter 553. The statute requires a TM to be published at least twice a year.

4.0 Resources

None

5.0 Contact Information

If you have any questions about this letter, please contact the Policy, Rules and Training Section by email at PolicyRulesTraining@hhsc.state.tx.us or call (512) 438-3161.

Endnote References

¹ All references to Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Part 1, Chapter 553, Licensing Standards for Assisted Living Facilities, can be viewed at the [Texas Office of the Secretary of State website](#).

² NFPA 101, Life Safety Code, 2000 edition
National Fire Protection Association, Inc. (NFPA)
One Batterymarch Park
Quincy, Massachusetts 02269

To review codes and standards online:

- [View the list of NFPA's codes and standards](#).
- Select the document you want to review.
- Select the edition of the document you want to review.
- Click the "Free access" link (under the document title)
- You will be asked to "sign in" or create a profile to access the document in read-only format.

³ NFPA 101, 3.3.134.7 – definition for Health Care Occupancy

NFPA 101, 3.3.134.12 – definition for Residential Occupancy

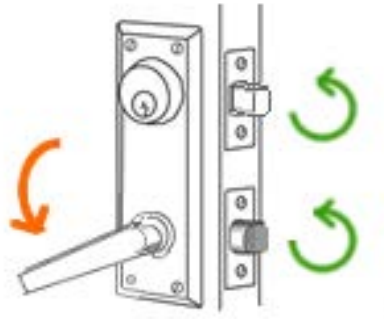
NFPA 101, 3.3.134.13 – definition for Residential Board and Care Occupancy

NFPA 101, 6.1.8 – chapters applicable to Residential Occupancy, which do not include Chapters 32 and 33 or 18 and 19

⁴ NFPA 101, 3.3.121 – definition for Means of Egress

NFPA 101, 3.3.122 – definition for Means of Escape

⁵ An interconnected or emergency egress lock is a door lock where the deadbolt lock and door handle are connected. When the door handle is operated, the deadbolt and door handle lock retract at the same time. Interconnected locks are commonly seen on hotel bedroom doors.



⁶ NFPA 101, 7.2.1.5.4

NFPA 101, 32/33.2.2.5.7

NFPA 101, 32/33.3.2.2.2

NFPA 101, 18/19.2.2.2.1

⁷ A door latch is the part of the door hardware that secures or “latches” the door to the doorframe.



⁸ Door hardware is the knob, handle or lever that unlatches and opens the door.

