



Use of Thumb Turn Locks

Building Division Interpretations and Procedures

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Code:	2018 IBC; ICC A117.1-2009
Section:	1010.1.9.1; 404.2.6

Section 1010.1.9.1 of the 2018 International Building Code (IBC) addresses hardware installed on means of egress doors. This hardware is required to meet the accessibility requirements of Chapter 11, with the exception that locks only used for security purposes can be mounted at any height, as detailed in IBC section 1010.1.9.2 and ICC A117.1-2009 section 404.2.6.

Furthermore, section 1010.1.9.1 states that hardware “shall not require tight grasping, tight pinching or twisting of the wrist to operate.” In the IBC code commentary under section 1010.1.9.1, it specifically states that “Items such as small, full-twist thumb turns or smooth circular knobs are examples of hardware that is not acceptable” but does not go into any further detail. Section 1010.1.9.4 provides for the installation of key operated locking devices when installed under the specified requirements and restrictions.

The installation of thumb turn hardware is commonplace and widely accepted throughout the region, but while the code provides very clear direction in the use of key-operating locking devices, the use of thumb turn hardware is more loosely defined. Given the similar nature of installations between thumb turn hardware and key operating locking devices, the use of thumb turn hardware will be accepted under the following conditions.

In Buildings in occupancy groups B, F, M and S, the main exit door or doors are permitted to be equipped with thumb turn locking devices for the egress side provided:

1. The locking device is readily distinguishable as locked (i.e., it must have a built-in indicator), and
2. A readily visible durable sign is posted on the egress side on or adjacent to the door stating: THIS DOOR TO REMAIN UNLOCKED WHEN BUILDING IS OCCUPIED. The sign shall be in letters 1 inch high on a contrasting background, and
3. The thumb turn does not require greater than a 180 degrees rotation to lock or unlock, and

4. The thumb turn is comparable in dimension and shape to a standard key head or larger and can be opened without tight grasping or pinching.

OR

5. The thumb turn is interconnected with a single action lever of other accessibility compliant hardware where only a single action is required to unlock the door.

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Date: 08/02/2022

Attachments

Supersedes: IBC-2011-09