



## Fire doors - essential, but not the perceived restrictive barrier

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### For:

Fire safety professionals

Care home owners

Education establishments

Health care establishments

Maintenance professional

Facility managers

### Summary

- Fire doors are essential for the safety of your customers and employees; it is illegal to wedge open fire doors.
- Fire doors need not be barriers to free flowing access in your property.
- Safe, legal and effective solutions are available to help you meet fire safety legislation and the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, as well as providing free flowing access or limiting the isolation of individuals.
- Installing fire door holding devices need not involve extensive disruption and cost.
- There is a solution available for heritage buildings, temporary work spaces, buildings with asbestos and large buildings.

In fire safety terms, doors protecting rooms and corridors are vital in stopping the spread of smoke and flames and facilitating the evacuation of people from buildings in the event of a fire. Given that this is, usually, a rare occasion in a building's life, fire doors can be seen as a barrier to access and ventilation in everyday life.

In order to alleviate this effect, it is often desirable to have fire doors in an open position during usual building use, something often done with a wedge, some other immovable object, or something to hand like, ironically, a fire extinguisher. This way of holding open fire doors completely removes their usefulness in the event of a fire, as hold-open methods of this type will be forgotten in an evacuation, preventing them from fulfilling their ultimate function. In the long term, holding a fire door open in this way may potentially damage the fire door meaning that when it is eventually put into proper use, its ability to provide a barrier against smoke and flame is compromised.

All this tends to reinforce the view that fire doors should remain closed at all times. However, heavy and cumbersome fire doors are not conducive to free access and unrestricted movement through a building. This is something that is recommended in legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act and is especially important in facilities such as care homes where



elderly residents do not like to feel isolated. This is where modern fire door holding technology comes in.

### **Installation and maintenance**

Traditionally, fire door holding technology has been hard-wired and is therefore permanently wired back to, and controlled by, a building's fire alarm and detection system. This is obviously a lot more practical if the fire safety system is being fitted at the building stage.

Installing a hard-wired system into an existing building throws up all sorts of unforeseen challenges and dangers that may be costly to deal with or rectify, apart from causing disruption and the requirement of remedial work for structural or aesthetic reasons.

### **Heritage buildings**

Listed and heritage buildings that are covered by tighter restrictions with regards to changes

in the building do not lend themselves to hard-wired systems as the work surrounding the planning, execution, and making good of a job are out of proportion with the benefits of the installed system which in itself may be unsightly. However, heritage buildings may need their internal fire doors held open for visitor access and for security reasons so that staff can easily monitor spaces for theft and vandalism.

### Temporary work spaces

Temporary work spaces such as building site offices face similar restrictions for fire safety, but their very nature means that complicated and costly installs of hard-wired products are inappropriate.

### Buildings with asbestos

Asbestos was widely used in construction until as recently as the 1980s. This is now known to be a material that can be hazardous to your health if not handled and controlled in the correct



way. In fact asbestos is now responsible for over 5,000 deaths every year.

The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 describes the management of asbestos as a process which requires a risk assessment of a planned install and the work to be carried out by specialists if material will be disturbed, both of which are potentially costly.



### Large buildings

As the size of a building increases, so too does the cabling and therefore installation time and disruption scale. Large buildings such as arenas, stadiums, shopping centres, and airports also have large amounts of open space which further exacerbate the issue as long cables run become even more inconvenient and expensive to install.

### What's the solution?

One way of avoiding these hassles is to install a wire-free system controlled by radio technology. Without the requirement for running long cables through a building and all the

disruption that goes with it, a wireless installation is much faster and non-invasive, and can even be installed with the building in full use.

The Salamander wire free system, developed by Geofire, addresses these concerns of installing a hard-wired system. The Salamander range comprises both door holders, which are installed behind the door at head height, and door closers, which are door mounted and make both fixed-hold and free-swing possible. All permutations are possible. These devices are controlled and monitored centrally from a device connected to the building's fire alarm and detection panel.

Salamander complies with BS7273 part 4, up to and including category A required in specific circumstances, the system is fully fault monitored and contains no acoustic actuators which may be susceptible to false activation. Configuration is as straightforward as a few button presses, without the need for specialist software or hardware often associated with other systems, and coverage can be extended throughout a large building using range extending 'booster' devices.

For product enquiries and information go to [www.geofire.co.uk](http://www.geofire.co.uk) or email [enquiries@geofire.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@geofire.co.uk).