

FDN(wh)Y Me?



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As an aid to laboratories in avoiding FDNY Violation Orders (VO) and Summonses (SUM), EH&S distributes monthly FDNY inspection findings which have resulted in a Violation or Summons citation to an actual laboratory on either the Morningside or Medical Center campus. These real-life scenarios are meant to assist the research community in ensuring that such conditions do not exist in Columbia University laboratories.

September 2022 – Fire-rated Doors

Laboratories are designed and built to meet specific infrastructural requirements to support work involving hazardous materials in the room. Amongst these design features are the lab's fire-rated doors, which serve as the primary access and egress from the laboratory to the surrounding corridors. Fire-rated doors serve as barriers to limit the spread of fire beyond a room by restricting the availability of air/oxygen, thereby confining the fire. Consequently, a propped-open fire door compromises the protection that these special barriers provide to workers escaping the building in the event of a fire.

Fire-rated doors must be maintained properly to ensure functionality and protection. Most importantly, these doors must be accessible and free of obstructions caused by equipment and other storage items to facilitate egress readily in a fire/life emergency. The FDNY NYC Fire Code requires doors to automatically self-close and latch after being opened and released from any position (FC 703.2). Doors must not be tampered with or altered in any manner that could inhibit their ability to shut automatically after opening. Laboratory staff must avoid altering components such as the door hinge, frame, and closing device. Some frequently identified examples of unacceptable modifications to avoid are:

- Taping over the door latch to prevent it from closing firmly
- Wedging items between and around the threshold or frame that prevent the door from closing
- Permanently uninstalling any door component that impacts its functionality, most notably the door closing mechanism, which actively allows it to close automatically as designed
- Creating any holes, openings, gaps, or penetrations in the door's physical surface that compromise the integrity of the door
- Upon identifying any of the above conditions related to the mechanical operation of a fire door, laboratory personnel should submit a [Work Order](#) to Facilities to request repairs and adjustments.

Please note, the FDNY Laboratory Inspection Unit is on-site weekly at the Morningside and Irving Medical Center campuses. For a consultation before the FDNY inspector gets around to your lab, or for any question, concern, or help, please contact an EH&S Safety Advisor.
<https://research.columbia.edu/safety-advisor-team>