SOLUTIONS FOR MANAGING LOCKED EXITS IN FACTORIES

The risks and hazards of locking exits should always be discussed with factory management as soon as possible. These guidelines are intended to provide alternative solutions for managing and maintaining safe work environments, recognizing that locking the fire exits or other doors on the means of egress is not a safe or responsible solution. There is a need to demonstrate to factory owners and managers that there are many alternatives that will provide the same outcome through more appropriate management controls. These measures will still improve security, but not at the cost of safety.

✓ ***Common Scenario's found at a factory include:***

- Presence of Hasps, bolts etc. at exit doors and gates.
- Presence of padlock arrangement.
- Presence of provision of using chain lock (Holes at the door leaf)
- The presence of wall brackets for the fitting of door bars across the doorway to prevent exit.

✓ ***Probable Root Causes:***

- To restrict entry of unauthorized personnel.
- To guard from theft.
- To prevent workers from going outside during working hours specially for smoking purpose.
- Lack of awareness of door maintenance team, as sometimes they just put hasp, bolt provision during replacing of damaged panic bar/push bar system without knowing the consequences.
- Other perceived security risks.

✓ ***Hazard/Danger/Risks of locked exits***

- Risk of workers being trapped or crushed inside in case of fire or other need to evacuate. This will also incite panic leading to the potential for further loss of life.

✓ ***Possible Alternatives/physical changes/improvement:***

- Each fire door has provision from locking from outside which does not interrupt evacuation from inside. So, it can be used unless there is a requirement re-entry provision, such as on stairs in a high-rise building.
- This arrangement of a panic bar/push bar mechanism (Panic exit devices operated by a horizontal bar) can be used at final exit doors even if it is not fire door. (For example- exits of single story shed where a fire door is not required). This is because this device has the facility to be locked to prevent entry, but still allows an exit without the need for a key. The door will lock behind the person as they leave the building, they cannot re-enter.

- Closed circuit television cameras may be used to provide additional supervision of such exit routes – preferably through "real-time" monitoring (offering the possibility of immediate security response) or through the recording of images (to support detection, arrest and conviction in criminal cases, or disciplinary procedures in cases of staff misuse). This type of system is a real deterrent both to unauthorized entry and significantly reduces the risk of theft.
- A dedicated smoking zone should be established for workers. This is one of the key ways that you can prevent people from smoking in unauthorized areas of the workplace. If there isn't a dedicated area for smokers then they will find places to smoke. It is better that you manage this situation as part of your risk management of the factory. Worker can use the place during their break time for smoking. This will reduce the tendency of going outside during working hour for smoking purpose, or worse smoking inside the factory. The other point is that smoke alarms will activate if people smoke inside the factory.
- There will be a need to repair any holes in fire doors made to hold any locking device such as chain lock and should be reflected in the door maintenance report. The hole in the door may also damage the rockwool insulation. Any welding on the door also damages the door and reduces the fire resistance as it destroys the internal rockwool insulation. All repairs will have to be carried out in line with the manufacturer's instructions and in some cases if the door is badly damaged it may need to be replaced.

✓ ***Monitoring Process from Factory end:***

- Inspection of means egress should be conducted daily and at the change of every shift for 24-hour operation. The presence of locking features, hasps, bolts etc. at exit doors can be checked regularly.
- Workers working at the floors may inform to the responsible person if there noticed such locking features at exit doors. They also have the option of calling the helpline if management do not take care of this situation.
- Factory Internal audit team (HIRA team) can check for locked exits and report it while conducting internal audit as a part of hazard identification and risk assessment.
- Emergency response team can check for locked exits while conducting evacuation drills and report the matter.
- Security guard who is assigned at those locations can check it as a part of his/her regular duty and prevent anyone from fitting such a device.
- All above points should be included in the relevant policies (i.e., OHS policy, Preventative maintenance policy, communication policy, emergency response policy etc.) to establish an effective safety management system to monitor the issue.

✓ ***Awareness Training for proper monitoring:***

Awareness training about 'The risk and consequences of locked exits' should be provided covering the following people to minimize the tendency of putting locking provision at exit doors:

a) **Everyone is responsible for their own safety and the safety of the factory. Specific groups with safety responsibilities at your factory may include:**
b) Factory manager or mid-level management person who normally provide order to the arrange locking provision at the exits
c) Floor level management (Floor supervisor, floor in-charge, line chief etc.)
d) Workers working at the floors
e) Security guards
f) Internal Audit team (HIRA Team)
g) Responsible team or person who conduct inspection of means of egress.
h) Door maintenance team
i) Emergency Response team
j) Safety Committee members

Remember, at all times that everyone is responsible for their own safety and the safety of the factory.

✓ ***Once it is found, monitoring process through 90-day reports will be as follows:***

- In 90-day report format, there is a provision for submitting inspection reports of means of egress through which factory submits reports and **must demonstrate to the satisfaction of their customers** that the means of egress is not blocked and that doors are not locked or damaged. Checking for presence of locking arrangement at exits is included in this point. Factory must submit date stamped pictorial evidence of the exits under this point.

Other ways that factories can demonstrate to their customers that they are managing and maintaining a safe means of egress at their factory include, but are not limited to the following actions:

- From Fire door maintenance reports and evidence where factory provides evidence of the fire doors that includes inspection of such unauthorized modifications (for example installing addition hasps, bolts etc. at fire door). Also, maintenance work done to remove the locking arrangement needs to be reflected in the report.
- Status of exits can be also found in the Fire drill or evacuation drill report which factory provides in every 90-days.
- Safety committee meeting minutes provided in 90-day report can be checked whether this issue is included there or not.
- Hazard identification and risk assessment report provided in 90-day report can be checked whether this issue is noticed further or not.

- As Elevate team receives information from Helpline team if they get any call regarding lockable exit from any factory, the above-mentioned documents can be checked at the next cycle of 90-day report of that Helpline call.