

TECHNICAL

By Who's Authority?

By Steve Hahn

When the coil of a rolling fire door is above a drop ceiling, should the fusible links be located above the ceiling, below it, or above and below it?

Should a rolling fire door be installed in front of an elevator?

Do fusible links really need to be installed on both sides of the wall when a fire door is installed over a window on the interior side of an exterior wall on the third floor?

Should the bolts be located at the top or the bottom of the slots in the guides?

These are examples of a few of the many questions that may arise when reviewing plans, making a site visit, or inspecting a rolling fire door. And when there are questions about rolling fire doors, where can the answers be found?

- Consult with the fire door manufacturer. After all, they're the ones who designed the door. And they will have answers to many questions. Some manufacturers have installation instructions and operation and maintenance information posted on their websites.
- Refer to *NFPA-80 Standard for Fire Doors and Other Opening Protectives*. This is the standard that regulates installation and maintenance and is referenced in model codes. In the 2007 edition, general requirements are covered in Chapter 4, care and maintenance is covered in Chapter 5, and installation of various types of rolling fire doors is covered in Chapters 11, 12 and 13.
- Check with DASMA. The Door and Access System Manufacturers Association has a number of fire door related Technical Data Sheets (TDS) available on their website www.dasma.com that provide additional guidelines for installation and maintenance.

Manufacturers, *NFPA-80*, and DASMA are examples of valuable sources of credible information. But they won't have all the answers - because they can't. Those entities are not responsible for making the decisions about what may or may not be acceptable in certain applications. Sometimes, there just aren't



simple, readily available answers to questions about fire doors. So, what then? Who has the responsibility - and the authority - to answer the tough questions?

NFPA-80 frequently refers to the Authority Having Jurisdiction - the AHJ. The AHJ is defined as an organization, office, or individual responsible for enforcing requirements of a code or standard, or for approving equipment, materials, an installation or procedure. Typical AHJ's include federal, state, local or other regional departments or individuals such as a fire chief, fire marshal, building inspector, or others having statutory authority.

This means that in some cases, the Authority Having Jurisdiction may be the only source for answers to questions about fire doors. And before they are able to provide those answers, they may need to evaluate a number of factors. What is the building type and occupancy? Is the building sprinklered or non-sprinklered? Is the drop ceiling fire rated or non-rated? Is there a wall above the ceiling behind the door coil, and is it rated or non-rated construction? Is there acceptable means of egress? Is there a risk to exterior fire exposure? The list could go on and on. And finally, the AHJ may need to actually interpret applicable building and fire codes.

Many times there are simple, readily available answers to questions about rolling fire doors. But sometimes answers are much more complicated and require authority - the Authority Having Jurisdiction.



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