

HOLD OPEN DEVICES

Fire separations are installed in buildings to contain a fire to limit damage to the property, or to protect occupants of a building to allow them to escape using a safe path or a stairwell. Fire doors within those fire separations must be kept closed at all times – day and night – to be effective in containing the fire. All fire doors are fitted with automatic closers but these closed doors can be inconvenient and can lead to the habit of doors being wedged open for ease of thoroughfare within the building.

A wedged-open door will allow smoke and heat from a fire to pass through obstructing egress paths and causing wider than expected damage. This is not only a risk to the life safety of occupants but is viewed dimly by insurers who can refuse to cover damage which would otherwise have been contained within a single fire cell.

Where doors need to be open to allow thoroughfares to remain unobstructed, the solution is to install a device which will hold the door in the open position but automatically release the door to allow it to close when there is a fire.

This is normally done with an electro-magnet mounted on the wall or floor which the door latches on. The hold open device can either receive a signal from the automatic fire alarm in the building (if this includes a smoke detector on both sides of the door) or can be interconnected to a stand-alone smoke detector on each side of the door. When smoke is detected the door will automatically close, allowing the door to remain open in normal use but to seal and close when it is needed.

Hold-open devices can be retrospectively installed or can be included in any new alterations in a building and are acceptable by the Building Code. Older versions of the code encouraged hold-open devices to be installed where necessary however the current code requires hold open devices to be installed on any fire door which is likely to be wedged open at any time.

The installation of hold-open devices on a door must be approved by council through a building consent or exemption. The system will require inspection as part of the building warrant of fitness process.

Costs vary for the installation of hold-open devices and their associated detectors depending on how difficult cable paths will be, but a rough guide for installation costs is a system for a single door will cost around \$1000.00+GST, and a double door around \$1500.00+GST. We can also provide documents for you to submit for consent, but costs for submitting the consent application and any council fees would need to be considered as well if applicable. The council may consider this work under a Building Act exemption, but exemptions must also be applied for.

