HEALTH & SAFETY

Finger Protection Guidelines

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**Finger Protection at Doors**

# Introduction

This guidance relates to devices for preventing finger accidents at the crushing areas between the hinged sides of doors and their frames and is particularly relevant to nurseries, primary schools and special schools. It may also be relevant for secondary schools where risk assessment identifies doors which pose a significant risk of injury because of their design, location, and frequency of use or types of user.

# Scope

When a door closes into its frame there are various points at which fingers may become trapped. Although finger accidents at doors do not occur frequently, they can be very distressing and result in permanent injury, including amputation in the most severe cases. However, such accidents can be easily prevented by fitting doors with simple plastic devices which prevent access to the crushing areas.

Account should be taken of:

* It is reasonable to assume that those of ‘early years’ group, or younger, are at greatest risk. The provision of suitable self-closers and / or hinge protection devices is therefore recommended in all nursery and reception class areas.
* When planning accommodation extension / re-modelling / re-furbishing projects the need for door safety devices should be considered at an early design stage to ensure that doors and devices are compatible and suitable for the application;
* Where existing doors are being considered it should be noted that not all types of doors will accommodate such devices and it is therefore important to take appropriate specialist advice; and
* Fire doors and emergency exits must not be compromised with additional safety devices. Where a risk assessment determines that a fire door would benefit from such a protective device caution should be taken to ensure that whichever device is selected complies with the relevant fire safety regulations and it may be necessary to seek further advice from a specialist.

# Areas of Risk

**Latch**

In the latch area of the door it is relatively simple to reduce the risk - self-closing devices can be installed which reduce the pace of closure. Alternatively foam bumpers can be used and are very useful though only where it isn’t necessary for the door to close fully.

**Hinge trap**

A wide gap opens up on one side of the door - known as the hinge cavity - and on the other, where the pin of the latch is located, there is a smaller gap which may be a risk to very small children.

**NB:** It is worth noting that the use of self-closing devices also gives some protection at the hinge side of the door, but if there’s a risk to young children it will not be sufficient.

# Action Required

If your premises do not already have such devices, you should carry out a risk assessment and decide which doors should receive priority.

Any injury at a door without such protection should be reported on the Council accident / incident system. If the injury requires hospital attention, it must also be reported to the Government Health & Safety Executive (HSE) under the RIDDOR scheme. This could result in enforcement action being taken by HSE. In addition, any claim for compensation is likely to be successful.

# Risk Assessment

A systematic inspection of all internal doors should be undertaken, looking at the characteristics of the doors (e.g. fire door, heavy, fast closing, automated etc.) and their location in relation to the use of the premises. To assist with undertaking this risk assessment, the following factors should be taken into consideration. Please note that this list is not presented in any particular order of importance and that additional factors not referred to here may be relevant for individual schools.

* Age group concerned (also consider younger siblings who may come into school);
* Special needs and / or behaviour management issues;
* School layout / design. In particular where the door is heavy, in an area where children congregate or susceptible to being blown by a gust of wind;
* Congregational areas (e.g. entrance areas, dining hall, cloakrooms, toilets etc.);
* Pupil movements / timetable requirements;
* Security issues;
* Supervision levels;
* Type of doors (e.g. internal / external, fire door etc.);
* Design / weight of doors (e.g. metal edges etc.);
* Are self-closers fitted and if so, are they routinely checked for correct operation;
* History of related accidents in the school;
* Any other relevant factors.

# Types

The devices are held in place by either self-adhesive strips or screws and thus can be temporarily removed to permit redecoration or maintenance. Screws provide a secure form of fixing and avoid the problems associated with adhesive strips or staples.

All devices are sold as door length strips, usually just under 2 metres (6ft 6ins) in length. As only the lower part of a door hinge area poses a foreseeable danger to children, there is an argument that one strip could be cut in half and used to protect 2 doors. Except for locations such as nurseries where young children are likely to touch a door at or near floor level, it might be appropriate to start the bottom of the strip at about 25 cms (10 inches) from the floor. However, half-length strips may not look as neat as a full height device, may be more vulnerable to damage and give no protection for taller older persons, -although such persons are normally less likely to have injuries at doors. If you opt to use half-length devices, carry out a risk assessment in relation to the locations of the doors and users, including a check that no child can reach the top of any half-length installation.

# Before Ordering

Before ordering any product, it is advisable to check details with the maker, including design, colour, fitting instructions, prices, and discounts for buying multiple units, delivery charges and guarantees about durability.

# Checks after Installation

You should ensure that a regime of regular visual inspection is implemented to check for damage (caused for example by trolley impact) or deterioration of the means of fixing so that appropriate remedial action can be taken.

In addition, staff should be encouraged to be vigilant for and report damaged devices. Furthermore, there are good reasons why pupils and young people should be informed about the trapping hazard which exists at doors, the purpose of the devices and the need to tell staff about any damage they spot.

# Purchasing

Head teachers should contact their respective Facility Management for suppliers of finger guards.

# Version Control

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| 1 | March 2010 | Health & Safety | Document created |
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