

Finger Entrapment in Doors

School Advice Note

Introduction

1. Annual statistics indicate that over 30,000 children under the age of 15 visited UK hospital accident and emergency departments with finger/thumb injuries caused by doors and door frames with more than 1,500 needing some form of surgery. The types of injuries that may result from door incidents range from crushing, bruising and fractures to, in the most serious cases, amputation; however, whatever the outcome, every finger trapping incident is likely to cause pain and distress to a child.
2. Whilst all doors in schools are potentially a risk to children an analysis of previous accidents in Southampton schools has shown that classroom doors, toilet entrance doors and toilet cubicle doors represent the highest risk of finger trapping accidents, in line with national trends. Young children are particularly susceptible to door trapping injuries.
3. Trappings that might occur on the latch side of a door can be reduced by a suitable door closure mechanism. Where a trapping hazard on the door hinge side has not been eliminated by design, British Standard BS 7036 Part 4: Item 7.1 recommends 'the use of a finger protection device that either fills the finger trap or minimises the gap so as not to create a finger trap'.

Responsibility for the Maintenance, Repair and Replacement of Doors in Schools **For local authority, community and voluntary controlled schools:**

4. External doors: the Council's Corporate Estates & Assets team maintain external doors; however, the school is responsible for hinges, latches and other ironmongery.
5. Internal doors: schools are fully responsible for maintaining all internal doors including their fittings and ironmongery.

Requirements

6. As with all health and safety hazards, a risk management approach is required with the Headteacher having responsibility for ensuring that a finger trap risk assessment is completed with appropriate and timely follow up action taken.

7. The law requires employers to identify significant hazards and protect people as far as 'reasonably practicable'. This involves weighing up the degree of risk against the time, cost and effort involved in either eliminating or reducing that risk.
8. In terms of preventing finger trapping injuries from the hinge side of doors, finger guarding devices are widely available, relatively low-cost items that do not necessarily require specialist fitting.
9. Due to the vulnerability of young children and the potential severity and extent of any injuries they could sustain, it would be very difficult to justify not fitting them to the doors that present a risk in Foundation Stage and Key Stage One settings.
10. On that basis, the minimum standard set by Southampton City Council is that finger safety devices must be fitted to protect the hinge side edge of classroom doors, toilet entrance doors and toilet cubicle doors serving foundation and key stage one classes.
11. For all other areas and for other schools' decisions regarding door safety should be based on risk.
12. Where older children are involved finger guarding is not mandatory and may not be an appropriate control measure, however, the risk of finger entrapment should still be considered as finger entrapment incidents are known to occur to pupils across all age groups.

A Finger Trap Risk Assessment

13. A systematic inspection of each internal and external door should be carried out to determine the degree of risk and whether further action is required to eliminate or reduce that risk. It can be helpful to observe pupil activity during the inspection.
14. A finger trap risk assessment template has been developed for your use to help identify whether a door is considered a high, medium or low risk. The template can be downloaded from the Health and Safety Service Intranet/Schools.
15. Factors to be considered:
 - 15.1. Review your school accident records to establish any doors that may have been involved in previous finger trapping incidents or near-misses.
 - 15.2. Check the condition of the door, frame, and hinges.
 - 15.3. Check the areas where finger entrapment could occur i.e. both door jamb and leading edge.
 - 15.4. Ensure fire doors and emergency exits are not compromised with additional safety devices.
 - 15.5. Are there doors that should be fitted with closure mechanisms.
 - 15.6. Check that all doors already fitted with self-closures have a two-stage closing action i.e. rapid initial and then slow final close and are regularly maintained. Closers leaking oil are likely to be unserviceable and need to be replaced.
 - 15.7. Consider the age group and other characteristics such as special educational needs, behaviour and disabilities of pupils in determining the level of risk;

- 15.8. Consider areas where the children are not supervised e.g. toilets and where pranks by children could occur.
- 15.9. Think about circulation routes and queuing areas such as the dining hall.
- 16. Particular attention should be paid to the following:
 - 16.1. Heavy doors (with or without dampening mechanisms).
 - 16.2. Fire doors.
 - 16.3. Design of doors e.g. metal and timber doors without rounded edges.
 - 16.4. Doors next to areas where pupils congregate.
 - 16.5. Doors which pupils queue beside for lunch or other reasons.
 - 16.6. Doors near entrances.
 - 16.7. Doors that are susceptible to slamming from strong gusts of wind.
 - 16.8. Areas used by after-school clubs or community use, particularly if these involve younger children.
 - 16.9. Doors where there is a notice board or some other attraction behind or adjacent to the door.
 - 16.10. Changes to layout of rooms including toilets, which may introduce new hazards.

Determining the Risk

- 17. Having identified the risk factors during the inspection, each door should be given a risk rating of either high, medium or low. The judgment should consider the age group of the children exposed to the risk and any special educational needs, the likelihood of harm occurring and the potential severity should that harm be realised. For further guidance on the risk assessment process and evaluation of risk, refer to the risk assessment guidance in the Corporate Health and Safety Service Intranet.

Risk Control Measures

- 18. The following measures should be considered to help prevent finger trapping incidents:
 - 18.1. Try to reduce or remove the need for pupils to gather near the doors.
 - 18.2. Ensure that essential equipment is not positioned adjacent to or immediately behind doors e.g. A paper towel dispenser.
 - 18.3. Give regular briefings to pupils on the dangers of finger trapping.
 - 18.4. Ensure that all staff are aware of the hazard of door entrapments and their role in being vigilant and reporting defects and near miss incidents.
 - 18.5. Fit finger safety devices on doors that pose a risk.
 - 18.6. Consider risk factors when replacing or refurbishing doors.

Review the Assessment

- 19. The assessment must be recorded, retained and reviewed periodically. An annual review would be appropriate, particularly in Foundation Stage and Key Stage One settings. The assessment should also be reviewed if anything has changed or following an incident or near miss.

Checks after Installation

20. For both new and existing door safety devices in schools a system should be put in place for regular brief visual inspections to check for damage or deterioration so that appropriate remedial action can be taken if necessary. In addition, all staff should be encouraged to be vigilant for and report damaged devices. Schools should take opportunities to talk to children (as appropriate to their age and understanding) about the trapping hazards which doors pose, the purpose of the safety devices and the need to tell staff if they see any of these damaged.

New and Refurbished Classrooms and Toilets

21. In all new classrooms or major classroom refurbishments including toilet entrance doors and toilet cubicle doors in foundation and key stage one schools, the risk of finger trapping should be designed out at the planning stage. Where this is not possible, finger guarding devices must be fitted.

Product Information

22. To assist schools, Southampton City Council Corporate Estates & Assets team can provide a list of current commercial suppliers of door hinge finger guarding devices; however, they are not in a position to endorse these products.
23. It should be noted that not all types of doors will accommodate such devices; therefore, it may be necessary to seek specialist advice.

Further Advice

24. Corporate Estates & Assets team can offer advice to schools on the installation of finger guards and the maintenance and adjustment of existing door closure systems.
25. The Corporate Health and Safety Service can offer advice relating to risk management.

Headteacher Checklist ☒

- ☐ Carry out a finger trap risk assessment
- ☐ Fit finger safety devices where doors pose a risk
- ☐ Ensure there is a system in place for regular inspections of door safety devices
- ☐ Raise awareness of finger hazards amongst staff; ask them to be vigilant and to report incidents or near misses
- ☐ Review your finger trap risk assessment annually or sooner if Changes, incidents or near misses occur
- ☐ Consider door safety at the design stage of new or refurbished classrooms or toilet blocks
- ☐ Document your local health and safety procedure for preventing finger trap injuries