

## Finger Trap Guidance and Risk Assessment

It is considered a foreseeable risk that people, particularly young children, may trap their fingers in doors. This can result in painful and significant injuries such as crushed or broken fingers and even amputation in extreme cases.

It is therefore necessary to ensure that a risk assessment is undertaken to identify the risks posed by doors to users and decide on necessary control measures. Controls can include installing hardware to prevent fingers being trapped or it may involve making alterations or changes to existing procedures. Whatever control is adopted must be subject to ongoing monitoring to check its continued effectiveness.

**Finger guards should always be considered as essential for Early Years, KS1, Special Schools and Pupil Referral Unit settings due to the age of pupils and, medical and behavioural conditions that may be encountered.**

### Who is at Risk?

The first step is to decide who is at particular risk from finger trapping in a particular area.

E.g., younger children are at higher risk than older children as they have not yet fully developed an awareness of danger or motor controls to operate doors.

The easiest way to determine this is by observing the occupants during general usage to gain an understanding of which doors might be considered hazardous.

Do not forget to consider disabilities, special educational needs or behavioural issues that may contribute or increase the level of risk. Consult with staff to see if they are aware of any particular issues.

Review previous incidents of finger trapping as these may give you an idea of areas at particular risk.

### Doors and Gates:

Carry out a systematic visual inspection of each internal and external door and gate 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.

#### Factors to be considered:

- Review accident records to identify any doors or gates previously involved in finger trapping incidents or near misses.
- Check the condition and maintenance of the door, frame, and hinges.
- Check the areas where finger entrapment could occur i.e., both door jamb and leading edge.
- Ensure fire doors and emergency exits are not compromised with additional safety devices.
- Are there doors that should be fitted with closure mechanisms?
- Check that all doors already fitted with self-closures have a two-stage closing action i.e., rapid initial and then slow final close & are regularly maintained. Closers leaking oil are likely to be faulty and need to be replaced.

- Consider the age group and other characteristics such as special educational needs, behaviour and disabilities of pupils in determining the level of risk.
- Consider areas where the children are not supervised e.g., toilets and where pranks by children could occur.
- Think about circulation routes and queuing areas such as the dining hall.

## Particular attention should be paid to the following:

- Fire doors – Safety devices should not be fitted to fire doors without advice from a fire door specialist or competent fire risk assessor. Altering a fire door may compromise its fire integrity.
- Heavy doors (with or without dampening mechanisms)
- Design of doors e.g., metal and timber doors without rounded edges
- Doors next to areas where pupils congregate
- Doors which pupils queue beside for lunch or other reasons
- Doors near entrances
- Doors susceptible to slamming from strong gusts of wind
- Areas used by after-school clubs or community use, particularly if these involve younger children
- Is there a notice board or some other attraction behind or adjacent to the door?
- Changes to layout of rooms including toilets, which may introduce new hazards

## Determining the risk:

Having identified the risks during the inspection, each door should be assessed as to what action is required. 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 occur.

## Risk control measures:

In some circumstances the door may require safety devices fitting to prevent harm occurring but in other circumstances it may be sufficient to implement or alter procedural controls such as keeping children orderly i.e., in a supervised line and not allowing them to congregate around doors. You may decide however that it will just be less time consuming and cheaper to fit the safety device in the first instance.

## Measures to consider assisting in preventing finger trapping incidents:

- Try to reduce or remove the need for pupils to gather near the doors this may require the relocation of equipment or notice boards causing the issue
- Ensure that essential equipment is not positioned adjacent to or immediately behind doors e.g., a paper towel dispenser
- Give regular briefings to pupils on the dangers of finger trapping
- Ensure that all staff aware of the hazard of door entrapments and their role in being vigilant and reporting defects and near miss incidents
- Fit finger safety devices on doors that pose a risk

- Consider whether fire alarm activated hold open (magnetic devices) are required to prevent the need for opening and closing doors during the day. Especially in high traffic and communal areas.
- Consider risk factors when replacing or refurbishing doors
- Regular maintenance of closing and safety devices to ensure they are operating as intended

## Monitoring:

Once controls are decided upon, these need to be monitored as part of the school's regular inspection process. A review of the assessment will be required annually, where the usage of an area changes, after an accident or near miss occurs or there is any other reason why the assessment is no longer considered valid.

Where procedural controls are found to be ineffective, i.e., near misses or accidents occur it may be necessary to fit safety devices on the doors. Any such guarding should also be subject to regular monitoring for both effectiveness and maintenance. Special attention should be paid where finger-guard devices are installed on emergency exit or fire doors to ensure the closing or opening action is not hindered in any way and there are no signs that the door's integrity has been damaged by the device.

## Note:

Before fitting safety devices to emergency exit or fire doors advice must be sought from a fire door specialist or competent fire risk assessor to ensure that neither the fire resisting, nor self-closing or opening properties are adversely affected by the alterations.

