

Preventing finger trapping injuries

Schools Safety Guide

Document information

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1. Introduction

Incidents have previously occurred in schools where young children have trapped their fingers in the gap on the hinged-side of doors and between gates and gateposts, resulting in very painful injuries including broken fingers, crushed or bruised fingers or finger tips, and the amputation of fingers.

Whilst all doors in schools are potentially a risk to children, an analysis of national trend has shown that powered doors (e.g. those with a self-closing device), classroom doors, toilet entrance doors and toilet cubicle doors represent the highest risk of finger trapping accidents and young children are particularly susceptible.

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 it is recommended that a finger protection device is used.

2. Risk Assessment Approach

Like any health and safety hazard a risk assessment approach is needed to identify any finger trapping hazards and to protect people from those hazard as far as is 'reasonably practicable'. This involves weighing up the degree of risk against the time, cost and effort involved in either eliminating or reducing that risk.

In terms of preventing finger trapping injuries from the hinge side of doors or gates, finger guarding devices are widely available with relatively low costs. Therefore, due to the vulnerability of young children and the potential severity of injuries that could occur, it is strongly recommended that schools fit finger guards to all doors that present a risk in early years settings, foundation, key stage 1 and special school settings. For all other doors the decision of whether to fit guards should be based on risk.

3. Carrying out a risk assessment

A systematic inspection/survey of each internal and external doors and gates 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.

Factors to consider when assessing risk: -

- Age, behaviour, special needs of pupils
- Location and likelihood of pupils queuing ('lining up') in close proximity
- Design and weight of door/gate
- Any previous finger trapping incidents/near misses
- Doors that could slam in high winds
- Doors fitted with self-closing mechanism's (e.g. fire doors)
- Areas used by after school groups or community groups

Following the risk assessment process, a finger safety device should be fitted on any doors or gates that pose a significant risk. However, schools should ensure that fire doors and emergency exits are not compromised by the fitting of any such device.

Your risk assessment should be regularly reviewed or if any incidents or near misses occur.

In addition to the above, schools should consider giving regular briefings to pupils on the dangers of finger trapping.

4. Inspection/Maintenance

For both new and existing door safety devices in schools a monitoring 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.

5. Product Information

Fingerguards, like the one in the image below, can be sourced from various suppliers on a supply only or supply and install basis.

