

# Guidance

## Door Safety – finger guards

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## 1. Introduction

This guidance has been produced to provide schools and other Council child care settings with guidance on reducing the risk of finger entrapment from doors within the premises.

The British Association of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons states that an estimated 50,000 children suffer hands and fingers injuries after being crushed by doors each year (2017). Fingertip injuries are the most common hand injury seen by plastic and reconstructive surgeons, with 1 in 6 injuries resulting in amputation. The top 3 risk factors for finger-trapping accidents are:

- Self-shutting fire safety doors
- Car doors
- Hinges

Young children are particularly susceptible to door finger entrapment injuries that range from crushing, bruising, fractures and in the most serious cases, amputation. However, whatever the outcome, every finger trapping incident is likely to cause pain and distress to a child.

Whilst all doors in schools/child care settings are potentially a risk to children, analysis of reported accidents has shown that classroom doors, toilet entrance doors and toilet cubicle doors represent the highest risk of finger trapping accidents.

## 2. Risk Management and Risk Assessment

As with all health and safety hazards, a risk management approach is required with the Headteacher/Manager having responsibility for ensuring that a suitable and sufficient risk assessment is completed with appropriate control measures and timely remedial action is taken.

Health and safety law requires employers to identify significant hazards and protect people as far as 'reasonably practicable'. In preventing finger entrapment injuries from the hinge side of doors, finger guarding devices are widely available, and are relatively low cost items. This would be considered a reasonably practicable action to take in protecting children.

**NOTE:** due to the vulnerability of young children, its foreseeability and the potential severity and extent of any injuries that could be sustained, as a minimum, finger safety devices **must** be fitted to protect the hinge side edge of classroom doors, toilet entrance doors and toilet cubicle doors serving Foundation Phase and Key Stage 1 classes.

For all other areas and for other schools and child care settings, decisions regarding door safety should be based on risk.

In respect to older children finger guarding 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.

### i. Finger Entrapment Risk Assessment

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 finger entrapment risk. It can be helpful to observe children activity during the inspection.

A finger trap risk assessment checklist has been developed for schools and other child care facilities to use in helping identify whether a door is considered a high, medium or low risk. The template is provided in [Appendix 1](#)

Factors to be considered:

- Review accident records to establish if any doors that may have been involved in previous finger trapping incidents or near misses
- Check the condition of the door, frame, and hinges

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- Check the areas where finger entrapment could occur i.e. both door jamb (door frame) and leading edge (surface of the door that leads into a room to which the door opens)
- 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 and are regularly maintained.
- Closers leaking oil are likely to be unserviceable and need to be replaced
- Take into account 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:

- Heavy doors (with or without dampening mechanisms)
- Fire doors
- 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 that are susceptible to slamming from strong gusts of wind
- Areas used by after-school clubs or community use, particularly if these involve younger children
- Doors where there is 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

In general it should not be difficult for a head teacher or manager to identify those 'at risk' doors. However, there are a variety of door types, made from a variety of materials and fulfilling different functions that may prove problematic in relation to fitting door protection devices. It is therefore advised that the head teacher or manager seek advice from a competent person e.g. Building Service surveyor.

### ii. Determining the Risk

Having identified the risk factors during the inspection, each door should be given a risk rating of high, medium or low. The judgment should take into account the age group of the children exposed to the risk and any special educational needs, the likelihood of harm occurring and 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](#) within the Corporate Health and Safety Service staff net webpages.

Risk assessment training is provided by Corporate Health and Safety training team for those employees who have to complete risk assessments.

[Risk assessment course - Staff portal \(swansea.gov.uk\)](http://swansea.gov.uk)

### **iii. Risk Control Measures**

The following measures should be considered to help prevent finger trapping incidents:

- 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 are 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 risk factors when replacing or refurbishing doors;

There may be procedural controls that could be applied, such as keeping children orderly i.e. in a supervised line and not allowing them to 'bunch up' around doors, is an established method of control however this will require significant supervision. It might be that extra levels of supervision will be required at busy times e.g. break times; lunch times, to achieve this.

### **iv. Review the Assessment**

The assessment must be recorded, retained and reviewed periodically. An annual review would be appropriate, particularly in Foundation Stage and Key Stage One settings.

However, the assessment should also be reviewed if anything has changed or following an incident or near miss.

## **3. Installation of finger guard safety devices on doors**

It is foreseeable that children in schools, may trap their fingers in the hinge-side of doors, therefore to eliminate the risk the installation of hinge guards or other similar solutions can be put in place.

There are a variety of guarding solutions available on the market with varying levels of cost. These range from plastic or metal covers to rollers which can be retrospectively fitted to doors or gates where significant risk is identified and cannot sufficiently be controlled through other means.

Some thought should be given to the durability and longevity of the chosen product against the cost of ongoing repair. It may be cheaper initially but more prone to failure in future.

Some examples of different guards are given below:



The responsibility for purchasing and fitting of finger guards lies with the school, as stated in the terms of the 'School Maintenance Division of Responsibility' (reviewed 2021).

Building Services can provide head teachers/managers with a list of current commercial suppliers of door hinge finger guarding devices, however, they are not in a position to endorse these products.

**Note:** Advice must be sought from a fire door specialist or competent fire risk assessor before fitting any finger-guard devices to fire doors in order to ensure that neither the fire resisting or self-closing properties are not adversely affected by alterations.

It should be noted that not all types of doors will accommodate such devices therefore, head teachers/managers are advised to contact a building services surveyor for further advice and guidance, before purchasing and fitting of finger protection door safety devices.

#### 4. Checks after Installation

For both new and existing door safety devices in schools/child care settings, 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 to the relevant person in the school or child care setting.

Schools/child care settings 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.

#### 5. New and Refurbished Classrooms and Toilets

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.

#### 6. Further Advice & Support:

For advice and guidance with your risk assessment contact your Health and Safety officer or contact the Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service on 01792 636210 or email [healthandsafety@swansea.gov.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@swansea.gov.uk).

For advice and guidance with the installation of door finger guards and the maintenance and adjustment of existing door closers contact Building Services

#### 7. References

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- [Corporate Health and Safety Policy](#)
- [Risk Assessment Guidance](#)



## Appendix 2

<b>Head teacher/Manager action plan checklist</b>	
Carry out a finger entrapment risk assessment	
Install finger entrapment 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 entrapment hazards amongst staff. Remind them to be vigilant and that they must report all incidents or near misses to relevant person	
Review your finger entrapment risk assessment annually or sooner if there are changes, incidents or near miss occurrences	
Consider door safety at the design stage of new or refurbished classrooms; toilet blocks or other rooms where children congregate or use.	
Document your local H&S arrangements for preventing finger entrapment injuries within your schools H&S policy and make your staff aware of them.	