

Estates and Facilities Alert



Action

Ref: EFA/2013/002 Issued: 23rd January 2013
Gateway Reference: 18651

Device

Window restrictors

Problem

Window restrictors may be inadequate in preventing a determined effort to force a window open beyond the 100mm restriction.

Action

- Review guidance on the installation, use and maintenance of window restrictors, e.g. HTM 55 and advice from HSE.
- Inspect all installed window restrictors.
- Consider replacing single restrictors with more substantial or robust devices, and/or add a second restrictor to better resist determined efforts to open the window beyond 100 mm.

Action by

- Senior Nursing Staff
- Director with overall responsibility for patient safety
- Directors of Estates and Facilities
- Risk Managers
- Health and Safety Advisors

Contact

Not applicable

Problem

1. An incident has occurred in which a patient died following a fall from a second floor hospital window. He forcibly overcame the window restrictor while in an acutely confused and agitated state following major surgery. Evidence at the subsequent inquest showed that the restrictor could not be relied upon to prevent a determined effort to force the window open beyond 100 mm.
2. The Coroner has issued a Rule 43 letter to the Chief Medical Officer in England requesting action be taken to reduce the risk of a similar incident occurring.
3. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is commissioning research into the robustness of window restrictors as the current British Standard relates to domestic type restrictors rather than those used where adults may be determined to escape or climb out of windows. The aim of the research is to establish how robust restrictors need to be in order to eliminate or significantly reduce the risk of them being forcibly defeated.
4. The Department of Health is considering reviewing the guidance contained in Health Technical Memorandum HTM 55⁽¹⁾ pending the outcome of the HSE's research, and taking into account the Rule 43 letter previously referred to.
5. Further information on falls from windows and other related topics is available from HSE - see References (2) and (3).

Action

6. All healthcare organisations should review the guidance on window restrictors contained in HTM 55.
7. All installed window restrictors should be inspected to ensure they
 - meet the restricted opening cited in HTM 55.
 - are in good working order and have not been damaged, disconnected or defeated.
8. Where problems are identified, a programme to repair or replace damaged restrictors should be put in place.
9. Where a single restrictor is fitted, consideration should be given to replacing it and / or fitting a second restrictor on the opposite side of the window if, for example
 - the existing restrictor is assessed as being of inadequate strength for the situation;
 - the restrictor can be disengaged without the use of a special tool or key;
 - the maximum opening exceeds 100mm;
 - the window is located within an area where it could be subject to determined physical abuse;
 - the window is in a location where patients are identified as being at risk and requiring supervision.
10. Assess the need for window restrictors in those patient locations where none currently exist.

Suggested Onward Distribution

- Accommodation Services
- Care for the Elderly
- Care Home Services
- Community Care
- Estates/Facilities
- Health & Safety
- Hospices
- Learning Disability Units
- Modern Matrons
- Paediatrics
- PFI Contractors
- Psychiatry
- Risk Management
- Stores
- Supplies
- Wards

References

- (1) Heath Technical Memorandum HTM 55 *Windows*, NHS Estates, Mar 98 (2nd edition) available at www.spaceforhealth.nhs.uk/ . **Note:** This HTM has been archived.
- (2) Health Services Information Sheet No 5 *Falls from windows or balconies in health and social care*, HSE, 09/12: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/hsis5.htm>
- (3) Further information relevant to health and social care can be found on the HSE website at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/healthservices/index.htm>

Additional information for England

The above sections of this Alert were compiled by the Department of Health in England and distributed nationally without modification.

Heath Technical Memorandum HTM 55 *Windows*, NHS Estates, Mar 98 (2nd edition) available at the NHS [Space For Health](#) information portal. **Note:** This HTM has been archived.

Previous advice issued by NHS Estates and the Department of Health : Hazard Notice NHSE HN(2003)03, 4 Feb 2003, DH (2007) 09 31st Oct 2007, EFA/2012/001 Issued: 19th Jan 2012.

Action required by this alert should be **underway by: 21st February 2013**

Action required by this alert should be **completed by: 23rd May 2013**

Enquires should quote reference number EFA/2013/ 002 and be addressed to:

Defects & Failures

Department of Health
NHS Estates & Facilities Policy Division 2W59
Quarry House,
Quarry Hill,
Leeds LS2 7UE
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HOW TO REPORT DEFECTS & FAILURES

Defects and failures relating to non-medical equipment, plant and buildings should be reported to the Department as soon as possible. Advice on how to report can be found in **DH/2012/001** Defect and failure reporting is an on-line reporting facility, available on the NHS Information Centre website at www.ic.nhs.uk

This Alert can be found on the following websites
<http://www.dh.gov.uk> and <https://www.cas.dh.gov.uk>

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