

Use of glass in workplaces providing early childhood education and care services

A safety alert that provides guidance to persons with management or control of workplaces in the early childhood services sector about controlling risks associated with glass panels breaking from human impact.

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Background

Earlier this year, a five-year-old child leant on a glass window at an early childhood service facility, which consequently dislodged and smashed. The child sustained a severe wrist laceration that required hospitalisation.

Following this incident, WorkSafe visited similar workplaces that provide early childhood services and observed a number of windows and doors with glass panes/inserts that did not meet the requirements of the relevant Australian Standard (AS 1288-2006 Glass in buildings – Selection and installation).

Glass panels in schools and workplaces providing early childhood services can be particularly vulnerable to human impact, for example where panels are mistaken for a doorway or opening.

Recommended risk control measures

Persons with management or control of a workplace providing early childhood services have an obligation to provide a safe environment without risks to health, so far as is reasonably practicable. To ensure the safety of employees and children:

- arrange for a glazier to attend the workplace to conduct an audit of all windows to establish which windows are required to be safety rated in accordance with AS 1288-2006
- replace any identified non-compliant glass that is required to be safety rated with glazing of a suitable type, thickness and size that meets the requirements of AS 1288-2006. Generally, those areas of a building that are particularly vulnerable to human impact should be fitted with either safety glass or thicker annealed glass. When broken from human impact, the chance of cutting or piercing injuries will be minimized by the increased thickness/characteristics of the glass
- ensure people are aware of the presence of glass by making it as visible as possible (eg through the use of

stiles, bars, opaqueness). If the presence of glass in a door or side panel is not apparent, mark the glass to make it visible

- treat glass with a product that prevents glass from shattering if broken
- guard glass with barriers that prevent children from striking or falling against the glass
- regularly conduct inspections of the workplace, including all areas with glass.

Note - the risk control measures listed above should also be taken into consideration when designing an early childhood services facility (including all indoor and outdoor spaces and structures). This includes taking the necessary precautions to reduce the risk of injuries that can result from glass breakage.

Further information

- AS 1288 – 2006 Glass in buildings – Selection and installation
- AS/NZS 2208 – 1996 Safety glazing materials in buildings
- AS 2047 - 2014 Windows and external glazed doors in buildings

WorkSafe publications

- Children's services: Occupational Health and Safety compliance kit, October 2011
- Injury hotspot: Children's services 2008

Contact Details

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For more information on occupational health and safety, go to WorkSafe's website: worksafe.vic.gov.au

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