

Health and Safety Bulletin

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October 2015

Manually Operated Horizontal Swing Barriers

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) recently reported that a member of the public sadly died after the car they were driving struck a horizontal swing barrier gate at the entrance to the car park of a sports ground operated by a local authority. The barrier in question is manually moved to open or close off access to an opening in a car park exit/entrance and is the type which swings open like a gate.

The accident occurred because the barrier was not secured, causing it to swing open into a dangerous position. This resulted in the end of the barrier going through the car windscreen, striking the individual on the head. The Council concerned was fined £160,000, plus costs. The HSE confirmed that a number of other fatalities and injuries have occurred in similar circumstances.

What action needs to be taken?

Managers or Building Stewards of all Northumberland County Council (NCC) and Active Northumberland managed sites, where horizontal swing barriers are installed, should ensure that the public, staff and others are not put at risk through their operation. The following action should be taken:

- A risk assessment should be carried out to identify potential dangers and ensure precautions are put in place to remove or control the risk. Any existing risk assessment should be reviewed to determine whether elimination of the risk is possible.
- Horizontal swing barriers rely on human intervention to make sure they are locked open or locked shut. Unsecured barriers can swing open due to the wind, gravity or as a result of vandalism. Barriers should be adequately secured at all times whether open or shut (a padlock will suffice). Managers or Building Stewards should ensure that those responsible for opening and closing barriers are aware of the need to secure them.
- The end profile of the barrier may not always be clearly visible to an oncoming driver. If visibility is deemed inadequate, painting or marking the barrier with alternate red and white bands, of adequate width to be clearly visible, will help reduce the risk of a person inadvertently driving into it (additional local lighting may also be required).
- Regular inspections should be carried out to confirm that the method of securing the barrier and highlighting of the barrier remain effective and have not deteriorated.

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- Barriers should be maintained in accordance the with manufacturer's instructions.

Other barriers/gates

Vertically opening or lifting barriers can also present risks to people if they are not correctly controlled. Risk of injury from these and other equipment, such as powered fire shutters, powered gates/barriers and doors should also be considered.

Again, a risk assessment should determine the dangers and what precautions need to be taken.

Thinking of installing a barrier?

If there is currently no barrier on site and installation is being considered, *vertical lifting gates or barriers* are a lower risk alternative, as is the provision of *lower height horizontal swing barriers*. The latter would mean that any collision would result in damage to a vehicle and that no part of the barrier would enter the vehicle and cause injury.

Further Information

Please see the links below for further information on the use of barriers and gates:

[Bulletin 2011-12 - Powered Gates and Barriers](http://www.hse.gov.uk/workplacetransport/barriers.htm)
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/workplacetransport/barriers.htm>
[HSE Bulletin OPSTD 1-2011.](#)

Property Services can offer further assistance in relation to inspection and maintenance of barriers, gates and roller shutters or if you are having difficulties implementing the required actions in relation to barrier security or visibility. Tel: 01670 624843.

Those schools/sites which are not in the Property Services Service Level Agreement (SLA) should make their own arrangements in relation to inspection and maintenance requirements. Barrier suppliers should be contacted if there are difficulties in securing barriers or visibility is deemed inadequate.

If you have any further queries please contact your Health and Safety Advisor or any other member of the NCC Corporate Health and Safety Team on 01670 623854.