

Window restrictors and protection against falling

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Question

Do window restrictors and/or safety glazing provide adequate protection against falling where windows have low sill heights?

Considerations

- Approved Document N (England & Wales) refers to the use of suitable safety glass/plastics or protection against breakage for window glazing below 800mm above finished floor level and glazing in doors and adjacent side panels.
- Approved Document K (England & Wales) refers to protection against falling from opening windows and glazed barriers.
- BS 8213 'Code of practice for safety in use and during cleaning of windows and doors' gives guidance on the protection and operation of windows.
- BS 6399 'Loading for buildings - Code of practice for dead and imposed loads' quotes minimum horizontal loads for the design of barriers.
- BS 6180 'Barriers in and about buildings - Code of practice' gives guidance on the design of glazed barriers.

Answer

Window restrictors are not considered to be a suitable alternative to a permanent guard to windows with low sill heights. This is because:

- a As restrictors can be disengaged they cannot be considered to be a permanent guard
- b The glazing would need to be designed to provide containment by resisting the horizontal loads prescribed by BS 6399, however, window restrictors are unlikely to be capable of resisting these loads.

For NHBC Building Control sites, the Building Surveyor will determine acceptable guard arrangements to windows with low sill heights at the design stage and restrictors will not be accepted. Advice should be sought from the Building Surveyor where the guarding differs from the approved design.