

Safety Requirements for Powered Folding Partitions

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Disclaimer: This resource has been prepared to help the workplace parties understand some of their obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and regulations. It is not legal advice. It is not intended to replace the OHSA or the regulations. [FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE SEE FULL DISCLAIMER](#)

Hazard summary

This alert is to raise awareness about the potential for serious injuries that could result from the use of powered folding partitions. These partitions are commonly used to separate areas, including in school gymnasiums, community centers, and conference rooms in hotels, convention centers or any other workplace space that may be partitioned.

Background

Critical injuries have occurred in a number of incidents in which a person has been caught between the edge of a moving powered folding partition and a wall. Powered folding partitions are designed to stop when fully extended against the wall or fully retracted. The movement of these partitions is often controlled from a switch located on one side of the partition which restricts the operator's ability to see the leading edge of the moving partition. Since only one side of the partition is visible from the control panel, a "blind spot" can prevent an operator from seeing another person who could be crushed. The crushing forces of the moving partitions may be great enough to cause severe injury and even death.

Hazard location

Powered folding partitions have two potential hazardous areas where a crushing injury could occur. The first area is where the leading edge of the closing partition comes in contact with the wall. The second area is where the partition panels retract into a recess in the wall. Both of these hazard locations could result in serious injury to a person who may become trapped, crushed or struck by the moving partitions.

Recommended precautions and control measures

Employers should identify and evaluate all powered folding partitions. Employers must take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances to protect against any crushing hazard. Precautions and control measures may include the following:

Control measures

- install dual control key switches located one on each side of the partition that are operated in the "on" position by two trained workers to ensure a full, unobstructed view of both sides
- install detection safety devices for extension and retraction such as a light curtain, pressure sensing or electronic sensing device to stop the moving partition if a person is detected
- locate controls so the operator is not endangered and the partition cannot be inadvertently operated
- install controls that cannot be made ineffective by a tie-down device or other means
- post warning signs and labels near each set of controls

Administrative and work practices

- keep keys for the powered folding partition secure and only issue to trained staff
- ensure adequate lighting during operation
- develop and deliver a training program on the safe operation of the powered folding partition
- implement a regular inspection and maintenance schedule, including monitoring of safety devices, and maintain inspection records
- implement a policy prohibiting untrained staff or any other untrained person from operating the partition
- implement a policy restricting access to the room while a powered folding partition is being operated

Requirements under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)

- An employer shall acquaint a worker or person having authority over a worker with any hazard in the workplace, and in the handling, storage, use, disposal and transport of any article, device, equipment, or a biological, chemical or physical agent (OHSA clause 25(2)(d)). For example, workers should be aware of any hazards involved in the operating of powered folding partitions.
- An employer shall provide information, instruction and supervision to a worker to protect the health or safety of the worker (OHSA clause 25(2)(a)). Such information and instruction may include:
 - review of the safety features and safe operation of the partition
 - administrative practices, responsibilities and accountabilities to ensure safe operation.
- An employer shall ensure that the equipment, materials and protective devices provided by the employer are maintained in good condition (OHSA clause 25(2)(b)). For example all equipment must be maintained as per the manufacturer's specifications.
- An employer shall take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of a worker from the hazard of being struck or crushed by powered folding partitions.

References

[CSA \(Canadian Standard Association\) Standard Z432-94 – Safe Guarding of Machinery](http://shop.csa.ca)

<http://shop.csa.ca>

[Occupational Health and Safety Act](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca)

www.e-laws.gov.on.ca

For more information, contact the Ministry of Labour Health & Safety Contact Centre toll free at 1-877-202-0008.

Remember that while complying with occupational health and safety laws, you are also required to comply with applicable environmental laws.

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