

Estates and Facilities Alert

Action

Ref: EFA/2012/001 Issued: 19th January 2012

Device

Integral side-stay mechanism window restrictors fitted with plastic spacers and used in many window applications

Problem

- Certain types of side-stay window restrictors incorporate a plastic spacer which, if allowed to deteriorate and crack, may result in separation of the retaining rivet and failure of the restrictor.
- Even with a restrictor fitted to each side of the window, the failure of one restrictor may be enough to allow egress with high risk of injury or death.

Action by

Managers and staff responsible for the procurement, supply and maintenance of windows and fittings within healthcare settings.

Action

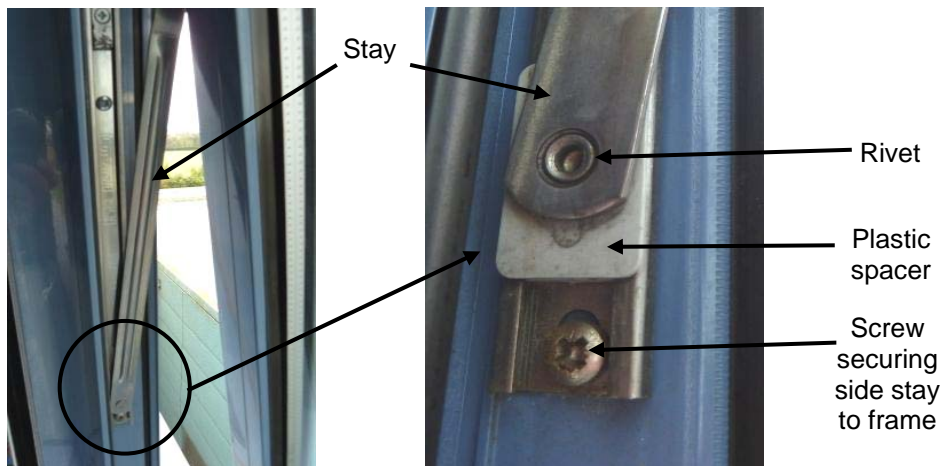
Windows fitted with this type of side-stay restrictor should be examined and where necessary remedial repairs and control measures implemented.

Contact

Relevant manufacturer, supplier or installer.

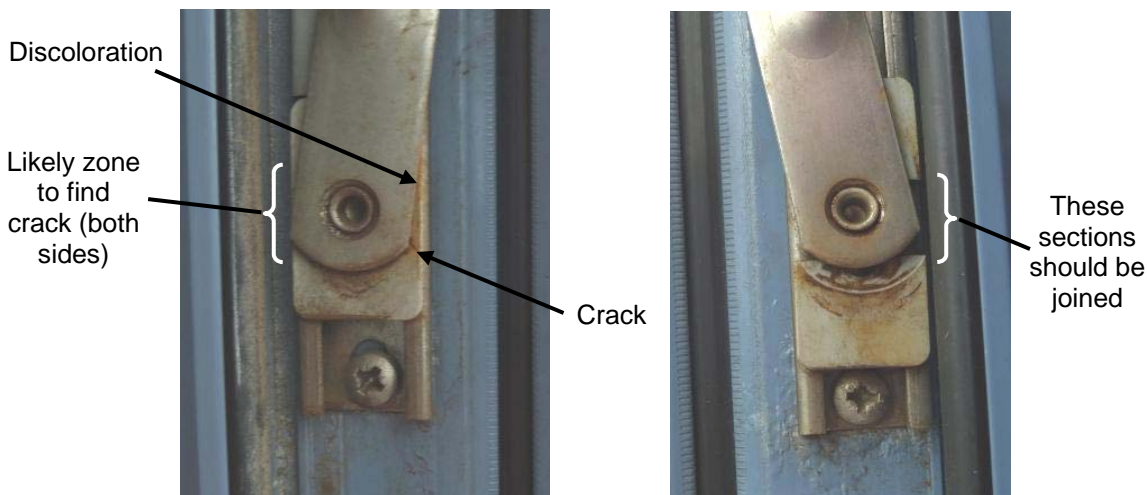
Problem

1. An incident has been reported in which a person fell from a 5th floor window after overcoming a window with a side-stay restrictor which, in conjunction with a second restrictor (on the opposite side), normally restricts the opening to 100mm.
2. Examination of the restrictor identified that a plastic spacer had deteriorated and cracked, allowing excessive movement between the stay and retaining rivet. The stay had eventually separated from the frame allowing the window to be opened beyond 100mm.
3. Where two restrictors are fitted, failure of one may be sufficient to allow the window opening to be forced beyond 100mm. The photographs below show the style of integral side-stay mechanism securing the side of the window to the frame.



Photographs showing side-stay mechanism and plastic spacer.

4. The rivet in this case had suffered corrosion, leading to cracking of the plastic spacer. The photographs below show corrosion stains on cracked plastic spacers (an orange colour). By this time urgent action is required.



Photographs showing cracked and completely broken spacers (with staining).

5. A contributory factor to the deterioration of the spacer may have been excessive use of steam or chemicals used for cleaning, and/or sunlight. The window had been installed for over 10 years.
7. This alert supplements previously published advice (see Additional Information for Northern Ireland – page 3).

Action

8. Windows with this type of integral side-stay restrictor should be examined for deterioration and damage and, where necessary, remedial repairs and control measures implemented.
9. Where a plastic spacer shows signs of deterioration, e.g. discoloration or cracking, the following interim actions should be considered:
 - Permanently secure the window closed;
 - Fit a secondary window restrictor, requiring a special tool to remove it, so that if an original side-stay mechanism fails, the secondary device will prevent the window from opening beyond 100mm.
10. A preventative maintenance programme should be put in place to carry out periodic inspections for damage of side-stay mechanism type window restrictors.

Suggested Onward Distribution

- Accident & Emergency
- Care Homes
- Care for the Elderly
- Domestic Services
- Estates & Facilities
- Health & Safety
- Accommodation Managers
- Office Managers
- Primary Care
- Psychiatry
- Risk Management
- Ward Managers

Additional information for Northern Ireland

The above sections of this Alert were compiled by Department of Health (England) in conjunction with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

The alert should be read in conjunction with previous advice relating to window restrictors – MDEA(NI)2007/100 published 29 November 2007.

Action required by this alert should be **underway by: 30th January 2012**

Action required by this alert should be **completed by: 31th July 2012**

Enquires should quote reference number EFA/2012/001 and be addressed to:

Northern Ireland Adverse Incident Centre (NIAIC) Health Estates Estate Policy Directorate Stoney Road Dundonald Belfast BT16 1US	Tel: 02890 523868 Fax: 02890 523900 E-mail: NIAIC@dhsspsni.gov.uk Website: http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/niaic
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How to report adverse incidents

Incidents relating to medical devices, estates equipment and plant in Northern Ireland must be reported to the Northern Ireland Adverse Incident Centre (NIAIC) as soon as possible. Further information about reporting incidents can be found in DB(NI)2010-001; and downloadable report forms are available from the NIAIC's website (<http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/niaic>).

Alternatively, further information and printed incident report forms are available from: NIAIC at the address above.
(An answer phone service operates outside normal office hours)

Estates and Facilities Alerts are available in full text on the NIAIC website

Further information about SABS can be found at <http://sabs.dhsspsni.gov.uk>

This Alert can be found on the following websites

<http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/niaic> and <http://sabs.dhsspsni.gov.uk>