

Medical Device/Equipment ALERT

Ref. MDEA(NI)2007/100

Issued: 29 November 2007

For:

IMMEDIATE ACTION	
ACTION	✓
UPDATE	
INFORMATION	



HEALTH ESTATES

creating healing environments

	Section
Medical Device/Equipment: Window restrictors	▶ ①
Problem: Defect or disablement of restrictor leading to the potential for patients to fall from height.	▶ ②
Action by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directors of Estates and Facilities • Facilities Managers • Risk Managers / Health and Safety Advisors • Senior Nursing Staff 	▶ ③
Action: All Trusts should re-visit the guidance on window restrictors contained in HTM 55.	▶ ④
Distributed by NIAIC to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chief Executive of each HSS Board Chief Executive of each HSS Trust Chief Executive of each Agency NIAIC Liaison Officers <p style="text-align: right;">Hospices</p>	▶ ⑤
Contacts Details of NIAIC contacts for technical aspects.	▶ ⑥
Feedback Requirements to NIAIC None required.	▶ ⑦

This Alert is on our web site: <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/niac>

1. DEVICE/EQUIPMENT:

Window restrictors

2. PROBLEM:

A number of other incidents have occurred in recent months where patients have fallen from the windows of upper floors. These incidents have resulted in serious injury, and in one case a fatality.

In England the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have prosecuted a number of NHS organisations, resulting in fines as high as £20 000 being imposed. This has obvious implications about the reputation of those organisations involved. In the most recent incident, a 30 year old patient sustained serious injuries after falling from a first floor window. According to the HSE, the injuries to the patient were entirely avoidable by taking sensible and simple preventative measures.

Patients in hospital are vulnerable individuals, and Health organisations have a duty of care to protect them. The Department of Health publishes guidance (HTM 55) which, if followed, could significantly reduce the risk of this type of incident.

3. ACTION BY:

- Directors of Estates and Facilities;
- Facilities Managers;
- Risk Managers / Health and Safety Advisors;
- Senior Nursing Staff

4. ACTION:

1. All Healthcare organisations should re-visit the guidance on window restrictors contained in HTM 55.
2. A review should be carried out on all installed window restrictors to ensure:
 - They meet the restricted opening cited in the HTM;
 - They are in good working order and have not been damaged or defeated;
 - Where problems are identified, a programme to repair or replace damaged restrictors is put in place.
3. Where a single restrictor is fitted, consideration should be given to replacing it and / or fitting a second restrictor on the opposite side of the window if. For example:
 - the existing restrictor is assessed as being of inadequate strength for the situation;
 - the restrictor can be disengaged without the use of a special tool or key;
 - the maximum opening exceeds 100mm; or
 - the window is located within a mental health area where it could be subject to physical attack.
4. Assess the need for window restrictors in those patient locations where none currently exist.

5. ONWARD DISTRIBUTION TO:

Please bring this notice to the attention of all who need to know or be aware of it. This will include distribution to:

- Liaison Officers
- Risk Managers
- Health & Safety Officers/Advisors
- Clinical Governance Leads
- Directors of Estates and Facilities
- Facilities Managers
- Estates Managers
- Fire Officers
- Nurse Directors
- Directors of Public Health
- Independent Health and Social Care Providers – Private Clinics, Residential and Nursing Homes through RQIA

6. CONTACTS:

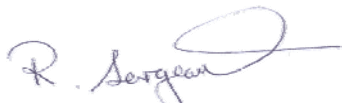
Enquiries to NIAIC should quote reference number MDEA(NI)2007/100 and be addressed to:

Northern Ireland Adverse Incident Centre (NIAIC)
Health Estates
Estate Policy Directorate
Stoney Road
Dundonald
Belfast BT16 1US

Tel: 028 9052 3868
Fax: 028 9052 3900
Email: NIAIC@dhsspsni.gov.uk

7. FEEDBACK:

None Required.



Robert Sergeant
NIAIC Operational Manager

HOW TO REPORT ADVERSE INCIDENTS

Adverse Incidents relating to medical devices, non-medical equipment, plant and buildings should be reported to NIAIC as soon as possible. Advice on how to report is given in MDEA(NI)2006/01. If you are in doubt about how to report incidents, please speak to your liaison officer or contact NIAIC using the telephone number provided. Adverse Incident reporting forms and an on-line reporting facility are available on the NIAIC website at www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/niaic

Heath Estates is an Executive Agency of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety