

Introduction

In 1994 over 20,000 injuries occurred as a result of electronically operated overhead doors. The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has traced the cause of death of 68 children to overhead door accidents. Other sources attribute at least 85 child deaths to overhead doors in the time period between 1974 and 1995. These numbers show the extent of the problem with overhead doors. Despite standards and legislation, people are still being injured and killed by overhead doors.

In 1999 the Consumer Products Safety Commission estimated that 755 injuries per year were related to powered gates in the time period from 1990-1998. This resulted in a total of 6,800 injuries. During that same time period 28 deaths occurred due to automatic gates, claiming victims from 17 months of age to 60 years of age.

A powered gate is a simple mechanism with predictable variables. There are many safeguarding measures that manufacturers of overhead doors and powered gates can use to minimize the hazard to people.

This Product Litigation Manual will review basic engineering design principles, in terms attorneys and other non-technical people can understand. Background information on overhead doors and powered gates will be covered to explain the different types, classes, and mechanisms of powered doors. Powered door accidents will be covered, and an in-depth hazard analysis of powered door design features will be discussed. Other important topics covered in this manual include a brief history of powered door technology, human factors related to powered doors, industry standards on powered doors, and powered door controls. An important question for attorneys considering taking on a powered door litigation case – ‘Do I Have a Case?’ – will be covered.