

Estates and Facilities Notice

Reference: EFN2301

Issued: 23 January 2023

Review Date: 23 January 2024

Assistance call alarm for accessible toilet: inappropriate use of isolation switch

Summary

A user who fell and sustained an injury in an accessible toilet was unable to activate the assistance call alarm as it had been inappropriately isolated. Recommendations are given on the installation, use and management of local assistance call alarms.

Action

1. Ensure that all safety alarms are included in a maintenance programme for routine inspection, testing and reporting. BS 8300 requires that emergency assistance pull cord alarms, where installed, are kept fully extended and in working order at all times. Note: this also applies to safety alarms activated by other means, where pull cords would present a risk.
2. Ensure that local isolation switches for safety alarms have a suitable level of protection to deter unauthorised use and are labelled to indicate their function. Protocols for use and labelling to warn against unauthorised use should also be considered. BS 7671 and the manufacturer's installation instructions must be complied with. Typically, the local isolation switch will take the form of a double pole switched fused connection unit placed at high level on a wall, or in a concealed / secure location such as a ceiling void or electrical riser, in the vicinity of the alarm.

Deadlines	Action 1	Action 2.
Actions underway:	01 March 2023	01 March 2023
Actions complete:	01 June 2023	01 March 2024

Equipment details

This notice is applicable to all local safety alarms such as accessible toilet alarms, nurse call systems, staff panic alarms, monitored emergency exit door alarms etc.

Note: Statutory testing requirements apply to fire alarms and emergency lighting.

Background

A vulnerable user with mobility issues suffered a fall and fractured an ankle in an accessible toilet within a healthcare facility. The user operated the alarm pull cord but the alarm did not activate, resulting in a delay to assistance being provided. The alarm system had been switched off at a local isolation switch, possibly to silence a spurious activation. The local isolation switch was not protected, through positioning or labelling, to deter unauthorised use.

Sanitaryware fixings were loose which contributed to the user falling in the first instance.

Manufacturer contact details

N/A

Suggested onward distribution

Estates Leads – Trusts and Health Boards

References

BS 8300-2: 2018 Design of an accessible and inclusive built environment Part 2: Buildings – Code of practice, Annex A: Management and maintenance, (b) maintenance issues (7) ensuring that emergency assistance pull cords are kept fully extended and in working order at all times.

BS 7671: 2018 Amendment 2: 2022 IET Wiring Regulations 18th Edition Regulations 462.3, 537.2.4, 537.2.5 and 537.2.7 apply as follows:-

462.3 Devices for isolation shall be designed and/or installed so as to prevent unintentional or inadvertent closure*.

Examples of precautions are as follows:

- Located within a lockable space or lockable enclosure
- Padlocking
- Located adjacent to the associated equipment.

537.2.4 Devices for isolation shall be selected and/or installed so as to prevent unwanted or unintentional closure*.

537.2.5 Provision shall be made for securing off-load isolating devices against unwanted or unintentional opening.

537.2.7 Each device used for isolation shall be clearly identified by position or durable marking to indicate the installation or circuit it isolates.

** Whilst closure of an isolating device presents a risk when electrical work is being undertaken, opening of an isolating device presents a risk in the case of a safety alarm during normal use, therefore appropriate precautions against unauthorised opening of the isolating device also apply.*

Enquiries

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The web-based D&F reporting system is managed by NHS Digital on behalf of NHS Improvement. For further information on this system, including obtaining login details, please contact the efm-information Helpdesk. Tel 0300 123 2106.

Northern Ireland:

Enquiries and adverse incident reports in Northern Ireland should be addressed to:

Northern Ireland Adverse Incident Centre, CMO Group,
Department of Health
Tel: 028 9052 3868 Email: niaic@health-ni.gov.uk
<http://www.health-ni.gov.uk/niaic>

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Scotland

Enquiries and adverse incident reports in Scotland should be addressed to:

Incident Reporting and Investigation Centre (IRIC)
Health Facilities Scotland, NHS National Services Scotland
Tel: 0131 275 7575 or E-mail: nss.irc@nhs.scot

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Wales

Enquiries and adverse incident reports in Wales should be addressed to:

NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership – Specialist Estates Services
4th Floor, Companies House, Crown Way, Cardiff CF14 3UB
Tel: 029 2090 4118 or E-mail: efa.ses@wales.nhs.uk