Kidsafe
Child Accident Prevention Foundation of Australia
Tasmania

GLASS SAFETY fact sheet

What are the Issues?

Many homes built before 1989 do not meet Australian safety standards for glass, exposing families and children to unnecessary risk due to splintering. Even though the standard was introduced in 1989 the changes were not retrospective and there has been little effort to upgrade glass in existing homes.

As many as 1500 Australians each year suffer glass-related injuries - many of these are preventable

Why is this an Issue Now?

Modern glass-making methods permit increasingly large areas of glass to be used in homes. There are many choices when it comes to glazing a new home or renovating an old one. Public awareness has simply not kept pace with the rapid expansion of glass possibilities. This is no consolation to glass accident victims who generally learn after the event that the accident could have been prevented. Safety in any area where an accident might occur should be high on your list of priorities when selecting glass.

If the home was built before mid-1970s, it is likely that very little safety glass was installed.

Annealed Glass was used as the alternative and is often found in windows and feature areas. Other names used for this product can be sheet glass, plate glass, float glass and figured rolled glass. All are made by melting together a variety of raw materials, such as salt, sand and limestone and are produced in flat sheet of various sizes and thicknesses.

If the annealed glass is broken, regardless of its thickness, it fractures into sharp, jagged pieces. However, selected and installed correctly, it is perfectly satisfactory material for most uses, **except where there is a risk of violent contact.**

Safety Glass

The simplest way to prevent an accident is to be certain that one of two types of safety glass is used in any area where there are risks:

- Grade A – Toughened & Laminated Safety Glass
- Grade B – Wired Safety Glass

These are covered by Australian Standard AS/NZS 1288 for installation and safety and AS/NZS 2208 detailing test requirements.

Since 1989 windows and other glazing installed in all new buildings have been required to meet mandatory specifications under Australian Standards.

Toughened glass offers 4 to 5 times the strength of ordinary glass of the same thickness. It is impact resistant and allows large clear spans with minimum fixing. In the unlikely event that the glass does break, it forms small particles, reducing the risk of injury.

When wired glass is broken, fragments of glass remain attached to the wire or will offer protection from injury by resisting penetration.

Standards for Shower Screens

Shower screens and shower doors must comply with Australian Standards AS/NZS 1288 and 2208 and be made of Grade A toughened glass or Grade B wired glass.

The minimum thickness of framed toughened glass (Grade A) is 4mm. The minimum thickness of partly framed and frameless toughened glass is 6mm.

Toughened glass has been known to break when a small chip of the glass disturbs the surface tension causing it to burst inward. This can be minimised by drying hinges on shower screens after each use, or cleaning them weekly with a mild soap solution, rinsing and drying. Do not use abrasive cleaners of any kind on hinges and other hardware. Keep glass clean to prevent mineral deposits

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How to Identify What Glass is in Your Home?

- Check for labelling, all safety glass should be labelled.
- Contact an accredited glazier to see if they offer a service where they come to your home and identify the glazing type.

Reducing the Risk

- Prevent contact with glass.
- Identify glassed areas clearly.
- Treat glass sensibly.
- Be aware of the type of glass in your home/area.
- Change to safety glass where necessary and practical.
- If changing the glazed area is not an option - see Safe Practices below.

Safe Practices

It is relatively easy in a lot of glazed areas to prevent any bodily contact. This is particularly important where you suspect that annealed glass has been used in doors, side panels or low level glazing.

Low Level Glazing

- Protect by barrier rails or recessed sills.

Fixed Panels along Side Doors

- Screen by furniture or plants.

Play or Social Areas

- Play or eat away from glassed areas.
- Use furniture that will not fall onto the glass, for example a table that will prevent direct contact.

Visibility

- Choose any easy to see stickers- such as brightly coloured cartoon characters. Place the brightly coloured stickers at adult and child height on the glass sliding door and glass panel. The stickers can also be used in any other glassed area that you might be concerned about.
- Make sure that glass areas are well lit at all times, especially at night.
- Where transparent glass is not essential you can use a patterned, translucent glass.

Behaviour

- Treat glassed areas with respect.
- Set rules where the glass is not pushed on, banged into or slammed.
- Role model safe practices in glassed areas.

Environmental

- Maintain a trip-proof area. Remove toys and loose rugs.
- Keep inside and outdoor areas dry to prevent slipping into glass.

Shelves

- Seek advice on correct glass thickness for shelving.
- Ensure glass is adequately supported.
- Ensure edges are either protected or use rounded edges.
- If shelving is chipped or cracked replace immediately.

Short-Term Safety Measures for Existing Glass

- If you are concerned that a glassed area in your home might be dangerous and do not wish to go the immediate expense of reglazing with a safety glass, you should consider taking other precautions, such as applying an organic-coated plastic safety & security film.

SUPPORTED BY Tasmanian Government

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