

Single and double hung sash windows

A child visiting a school was injured when a double hung sash window closed down onto her finger. A wooden wedge had been placed between the bottom of the window and the lower section of the windowsill. The wooden wedge broke when the child touched it, resulting in the window closing rapidly onto the child's finger. The window was found to have a damaged balance mechanism.



What is the hazard?

- Single and double hung sash windows are used throughout many Queensland schools.
- When in good working order, the two-piece window can be easily opened and closed in a controlled way.
- A hazard exists where the balance mechanisms of these windows become damaged or worn to such an extent that they can no longer hold the half window in place when it is opened and can no longer control the speed at which the window closes.

What are the risks?

- If a window slams closed, it can result in serious injuries to body parts placed in the path of the closing window.
- The size, weight and speed of the closing window can lead to serious, permanent injury if it comes into contact with body parts.
- The falling window may cause the glass to shatter thus causing injury to any person nearby.

Suggested controls

- All aspects of single and double hung windows must be regularly inspected and maintained to ensure that they are in good working order.
- Damaged or deteriorated windows are to be repaired as soon as possible. Short term controls should be implemented to ensure that the risk is managed if damage cannot be rectified immediately. For example the window could be nailed closed and marked with a warning sign stating that the window is damaged and must not be opened.
- Wooden wedges or other types of wedges must not be relied on to hold the window open.
- Any broken/cracked panes of glass should be removed completely from the frame to prevent subsequent fall onto persons in the room.
- Frames should not be moved until they are repaired.
- Schools should have a system in place to report hazards and implement controls to minimise risks of injury.