

By Christopher Johnson

Providing **safe passages** for healthcare facilities

Automatic doors are not mere portals

From entranceways to patient treatment areas, it is vital for healthcare facility owners and managers to provide safe and easily accessible routes for visitors, patients and staff — and automatic doors are a great way to meet this responsibility. Aside from the most obvious benefit provided by properly installed and maintained automatic doors — convenient entry and exit — they also help decrease patient transport time, provide independence for physically challenged people, and help to maintain proper air and temperature control.

But automatic doors are not merely aesthetic and functional, as they also provide compliance with accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The regulations ensure that physically challenged individuals are accommodated so they can enter a facility with minimal or no effort. Considering 43 million Americans are living with a disability, and that this number continues to steadily grow along with the increasing number of elderly, the urgent necessity of effectively serving this group is evident.

And considering how important these doors are, regular maintenance

in compliance with applicable national standards is paramount. Be sure that any door you purchase complies with the American National Standard for Power Operated Pedestrian Doors, A156.10. A new version of this standard was issued in 2005, and while some local and state regulations, and building codes require compliance with this standard, voluntary compliance is the norm.

It is also important to have trained and certified personnel perform maintenance and installation of automatic doors. An inspector certification program was developed by the American

Association of Automatic Door Manufacturers — a trade association of manufacturers of automatic pedestrian door systems — to educate installers and service technicians about the requirements of the A156.10 standard. The inspectors are trained to conduct field inspections of automatic doors.

A planned maintenance program for automatic doors in a healthcare facility will provide a sense of security that visitors are being served in the best possible manner. Maintenance programs also decrease ownership costs by improving the performance life of automatic doors within the facility, and there are numerous maintenance programs available to meet a facility's specific requirements.

Choosing the right maintenance plan

Issues that a healthcare premises owner or operator should consider when choosing a maintenance plan include; the number of automatic doors in the facility; the amount of visitor traffic within the facility; the age of the automatic door systems in operation; and the overall requirements for maintenance. For example, automatic doors in an emergency



Daily safety routines are important too

While long-term maintenance plans provide automatic door operators with greater reliability over time, daily safety checks help to maintain safe operation on a day-to-day basis. A daily safety check routine helps prevent unnecessary downtime by detecting small problems before they grow into costly and expensive ones.

Daily safety checks are best performed during low traffic periods, preferably around the same time each day.

Basic daily safety check recommended by AAADM:

- Test swinging doors by standing in the safety zone while someone steps on the activating mat/sensor area. As long as someone is in the safety area, the door should not open.
- Stand in the doorway for several seconds to be sure the door remains open.
- Test activation mats where needed by stepping on them for activation.
- Check electric sensor doors by walking toward the door opening at a moderate speed. Test the sensor from several different angles and directions.
- Doors with electric holding beams can be tested by covering the beam and standing still to be sure the door remains open. Next uncover the beam to make sure the door closes shortly after a delay.
- Two-way doors can be tested by repeating inspection procedures from both approaches.
- Be sure that automatic doors slide or swing open smoothly and stop without impact. As you move through the door, it should remain open. After stepping off the activation mat or out of the sensor area, the door should close without delay.

Building owners should have a copy of the owner's manual for operation of all automatic doors within their facility. Employees should be informed of the location of function switches, circuit breakers or power disconnect switches, and access to a phone number for service.

For more information about daily safety checks or for a copy of a generic owner's manual, visit the AAADM website, www.aaadm.com.

room or ICU will incur steady use 24 hours a day, seven days a week, so preventive maintenance plays a key role in ensuring they operate as expected.

A basic contract for automatic door maintenance will typically support inspection efforts for your facility. Under a basic maintenance plan, an inspector will check that the doors comply with the ANSI/BHMA A156.10 requirements, make necessary adjustments and repairs, and determine repair costs based on service time and materials.

During a basic inspection regimen, opening and closing speeds are calculated or adjusted, and the doors' sensors are tuned to comply with ANSI standards. Belts, gears, components, lubricants, pivots, glass and guide rails are also checked.

For the highest level of automatic door safety, full-service maintenance contracts are offered. Healthcare facility owners often find the full-service plan to be beneficial, as it can be easily factored into their annual door service budget. A full-service maintenance plan can be structured per year or per visit, and usually has a set price

per door for repairs. Full maintenance contracts include all service and repair checkpoints. Most importantly, the full-service maintenance plan will ensure that automatic doors within a facility are operating at peak performance for ultimate reliability and safety.

Healthcare facilities are places where people are protected, made well

and cared for by expert staff. Make it easy for visitors to access the care you provide by providing automatic doors that have been installed and maintained by experts. ■

Christopher Johnson is executive director of the American Association of Automatic Door Manufacturers.