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The Hands-Free Door Opportunity

Now is the time for industry professionals to step up with touchless solutions to minimize the spread of infection or contaminants.



» A low-energy door operator and a touchless switch make up a basic hands-free door solution.

Public spaces, such as health-care facilities, hotels, office buildings, convention centers, schools and factories are a breeding ground for germs. Across the country, we've seen a wave of new policies, procedures and technologies implemented to help stop the spread of germs, so businesses, schools and organizations can assure employees, customers and communities that their facilities are safe.

By applying some safety and security technologies, along with touchless solutions, at the door, locksmith and security professionals can create some peace of mind and profit from retrofit or new-building opportunities.

A Door Opens

COVID-19 and the lockdowns that followed were game-changers, as were the guidelines that businesses and communities were meant to follow to reopen. To see what guidelines are in place in your state, visit the U.S. Chamber of Commerce: www.uschamber.com/article/state-by-state-business-reopening-guidance. Many guidelines recommend the use of various types of touchless devices for hygiene: touchless faucets, soap and hand-sanitizer dispensers, towel dispensers, information kiosks, etc.

Then, there's the door. Here are some examples of reopening guidelines:

1. Fitness facilities: "Doors to multistall restrooms should be able to be opened and closed without touching the handles, using opening devices or powered door operators with the hand, whenever possible. If the door cannot be opened without touching the handle or door operator with the hand, place a trash receptacle by the door to ensure a paper towel can be readily disposed of when operating the door. The location and positioning of waste receptacles should not interfere with egress, evacuation, emergency equipment or any reasonable accommodations provided under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)."

2. Retail, shopping malls and workspaces:

"Install hands-free devices if possible." "Prop doors open if they do not open and close automatically."

3. Dine-in restaurants and hair salon/barber-shops: "Guests should enter through doors that are propped open or automated, if possible." "Wherever possible, doors should be left open if they do not open and close automatically."

4. Hotels, lodging and short-term rentals: "Guests should enter through doors that are either propped open, if possible and in adherence to security protocols, or are automated or manually operated by an employee who is frequently handwashing and/or using proper hand sanitizer."

5. Places of worship: "Prop or hold doors open during peak periods when congregants/visitors are entering and exiting facilities, if possible and in accordance with security and safety protocols."

We believe hands-free door solutions will become essential in today's COVID-19 mitigation-planning landscape. Retail, hospitality and restaurant locations are prime candidates to address health concerns by providing hands-free door solutions in combination with social-distancing mandates.

A Simple Solution

Touchpoints on high-traffic door openings can be reduced with a simple hands-free door solution. On a door that has nonlatching hardware, you can pair a low-energy swing door operator with sanitary touchless exit switches to create a hands-free system. By placing a wave-to-open touchless switch on the outside and inside of a doorway, the door operator can be activated by the

wave of a hand while still meeting fire and life-safety requirements.

Any high-touch, high-traffic door at entrances, meeting rooms, offices or bathrooms can be upgraded. Plus, this hands-free solution can be a quick and easy retrofit opportunity.

Some high-touch, high-traffic door openings use bollards, or push plates, or are part of a vestibule combination with other doors that are designed to meet ADA requirements. A variety of antimicrobial ADA accessories and buttons can be integrated with automatic door operators to minimize contamination.

Whether a door is nonlatching or latching, it requires an ADA bollard, push plate or button to make it ADA-compliant. A “knowing act” requires activation with a push button or push plate. Low-energy swing door operators also are governed by ANSI/BHMA 156.19 and include these features and requirements:

- Slow opening and closing speeds.
- Low operating force.
- Floor space requirements.
- No guide rails required.
- A clear opening width — 32 inches

minimum in power-on and power-off mode — based on the clear opening provided by all leaves in the open position.

Access Control Considerations

When retrofitting or designing a hands-free door solution, you should invest in the time to identify other door openings that have or might require access control and confirm the category of locking hardware that’s necessary for that application. (See “A Hands-Free Door Guide,” below.)

A hands-free door solution can be developed to use with mortise or cylindrical locksets as well as magnetic locks. Consider the following:

- High-quality electrified mortise lock upgrades that have motorized latch retraction can be combined with the basic hands-free door solution — a low-energy slide door operator and touchless exit switches — and ADA actuators and access control keypads to create a code-compliant solution.
- The basic hands-free door solution is flexible enough to use with a cylindrical lockset by simply adding an electric strike.

- The basic hands-free door solution can be used with a magnetic lock, where allowed by code.

And don’t forget that you can minimize touchpoints on high-traffic door openings by using a simple magnetic door holder to keep the door open. It’s another hands-free solution that works well to meet some reopening guidelines and is particularly useful during busy time periods.

Even a basic hands-free door solution can provide peace of mind. Don’t limit your ideas about where the opportunities exist for great applications of touchless door technology. It can apply to any public restroom, office entrance or door, restaurant kitchen, etc.

(Important note: Even with national standards in place, building-code enforcement that pertains to automatic doors and switch placement varies across the country. Consult your local authority having jurisdiction [AHJ] for compliance requirements.) ■■

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A Hands-Free Door Guide

Consider this flowchart to help with your recommendation of hands-free door solutions.

1. Qualify all of the high-touch, high-traffic doors in the facility.
2. Confirm whether the door has to meet requirements for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
3. If the door doesn’t require access control, simply combine touchless exit switches with a low-energy swing door operator, and you’re done.
4. If access control is required, identify the type of locking hardware that’s required for your door application before assembling the appropriate hands-free door solution.

