

<b>Health and Safety Executive</b>		<b>Sector Information Minute</b>	
<b>Agriculture and Food Sector</b>		<b>SIM 01/2005/02</b>	
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Target Audience:

HSE Inspectors responsible for food manufacturing industries

## **SAFE EXIT FROM FREEZER ROOMS AND COLD STORES**

This SIM gives guidance on precautions to prevent people being trapped in freezer rooms or similar cold enclosed areas. It revises and replaces FIC 520/14

1. Persons can become trapped inside freezers, cold stores or similar cold areas if the exit door cannot be opened from the inside. The following precautions can be adopted to prevent this.

- a) Doors in cold areas should be openable from the inside under all conditions. It may be necessary to fit local strip heaters to ensure that the door hinges, slides and securing devices are free-moving at all times.
- b) Doors should open outwards, be unobstructed and illuminated on the inside.
- c) Instructions for the door release device should be clearly shown inside the cold area.
- d) An audible alarm actuator should be provided inside the cold area and the alarm itself should be so located that it will attract the maximum attention.
- e) Before persons are allowed to enter a cold area they should be instructed in the use of the means of escape and warning devices, or should be accompanied by someone who has been instructed.

2. Additionally, there are various ways of ensuring that someone locked within a cold area

can escape.

a) A hatch may be fitted into the door retained by an easily removable fastening, such as a bolt or bar, which is accessible only from the inside. These hatches are sometimes fitted into the wall of the cold area, however there is a danger of the hatch becoming obstructed by goods. Inspectors finding the wall type hatch should advise the employer to ensure that both sides are kept clear of obstruction and that the area around it is clearly marked.

b) An alternative method of allowing easy exit from a locked cold area is to ensure that the strike plate located on the door surround can be easily released from the inside.

c) Another method, commonly used, consists of a specially designed latch with a door opening lever which can be locked. The latch is secured to the door and its corresponding strike plate is secured to the door surround as is normal. A push rod extends from the latch release mechanism, passes through the door and terminates in a mushroom head extending some 2 to 3 inches into the cold area. The only difference between this latch and the conventional type is a special release mechanism *inside* the latch housing. If the door is locked for security reasons (either by means of a padlock or by a cylinder lock which prevents the raising of the opening lever) it can still be opened from the inside by pushing on the mushroom headed rod which acts on the special latch bolt release mechanism.

3. Where power operated doors are used they should be openable from the inside even if the power supply is interrupted.