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#### Featured Articles

### Sliding Glass Doors: Defending against Claims of Excessive Pull Forces

by Michael Forte



Sliding glass doors are a common target in construction defect cases, and one common complaint is that the sliding doors are too heavy to operate. This article discusses several potential defenses against such claims.

#### Defense No. 1: The architect mandated heavy sliding glass doors.

The first place to check is the architect's specifications, which often will mandate a particular water resistance pressure. The water resistance pressure will determine the design pressure, which in turn determines the weight of the doors.

The standard at issue here is promulgated by the American Architectural Manufacturers Association. AAMA 101-97 states that the water resistance pressure must be at least 15 percent of the design pressure. Therefore, if the specs call for a water resistance pressure of 15 percent, AAMA 101-97 requires the design pressure to be 100 psf. The result is a very heavy door.

#### Defense No. 2: Industry standards mandate heavy sliding glass doors.

AAMA standards often are more than just aspirational. Some states, such as Florida, specifically incorporate certain AAMA standards into their building codes. For example, the 2001 version of the Florida Building Code requires sliding glass doors to be certified by AAMA. To receive certification, the doors must meet pull standards. These standards require that, depending on door type, the doors must be able to open at a maximum force of 30 to 40 pounds, and must be able to keep moving at a maximum force of 20 to 25 pounds. These forces may not sound like much, but in reality they are quite substantial. Consider, for example, that a typical cinderblock can weigh in the range of 30 pounds.

#### Defense No. 3: Improper maintenance increases the forces required to operate sliding glass doors.

If sliding glass doors have passed AAMA certification, what could account for requiring excessive pull forces after installation? The most common answer is improper maintenance. Door tracks easily collect dirt, and sand and sea salt present additional concerns in coastal areas.

Most sliding glass door manufacturers promulgate maintenance standards to facilitate the smooth operation of their doors. Generally, these standards require periodic cleaning of all metal, vinyl and glass surfaces with mild soapy water using a sponge or soft cloth. In addition, AAMA has promulgated a detailed brochure titled "Caring for Your Windows, Doors, and Skylights."

[Sliding Glass Doors: Defending against Claims of Excessive Pull Forces](#)

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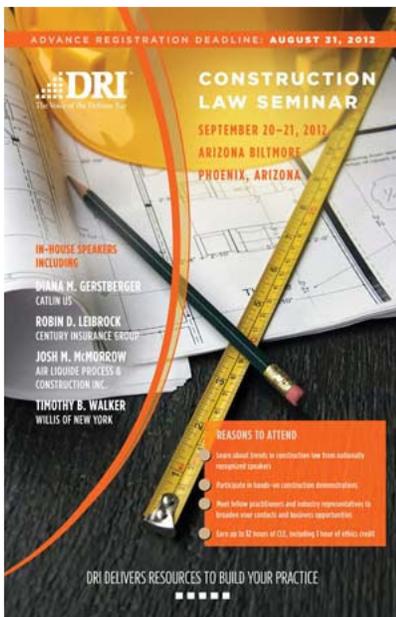
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The brochure sets forth maintenance recommendations for door tracks, including (1) cleaning tracks using a dry paint brush or vacuum brush attachment; (2) cleaning the frames and tracks with a mild, nonabrasive soap or detergent, followed by rinsing and drying; and (3) lubricating tracks and rollers. A homeowner's failure to follow these recommendations is certain to cause additional friction within the door track, resulting in unnecessary difficulty in opening and closing the doors. The brochure is available online at <http://www.aamanet.org>.

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