

Closed door policies

How door systems figure into FSIS's new Homeland Security Guidelines.

by Rick Brown, Special to Food Processing



Last spring, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) issued "FSIS Security Guidelines for Food Processors" and sent the 12-page document to all establishments regulated by USDA and Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The guidelines are specifically intended to address national security as it relates to U.S. food and pharmaceutical supplies.

An accompanying letter from Linda Swacina, a staff services administrator, indicated that FSIS planned to provide the guidelines to its field employees, who would assist in directing plants seeking further clarification or advice. "FSIS intends to continue working to enhance guidance to business engaged in the production and distribution of USDA-regulated food and to work with the FDA and other agencies to provide guidance for transportation, storage, and handling," the letter further related. "Guidelines for inspected establishments are a first step, but we realize the need for protections from the farm to the consumer's table."

What must food processors do to comply with these guidelines and how do overhead doors, overhead screen doors, overhead security gates and similar products figure into the picture? Many of the guidelines call for creating or enhancing physical barriers (doors) within the facility, and in areas separating the facility from outdoors. What follows is a section-by-section reading of related guidelines along with some commentary on their relevance on their relevance to doors and the door industry.



Overhead Security Gate

Food security plan management

“A food security management team and a food security management coordinator should be identified for each plant or company.” The coordinator and his management team are assigned to focus on the plant’s security issues. Although this may sound similar to an AIB/ASI-like food safety committee and involve some of the same personnel, this particular committee is responsible for responding to the security issues as outlined in the FSIS Guidelines.

Outdoor security

“All access points into the establishment should be secured by guards, alarms, cameras, or other security hardware consistent with national safety and local fire and safety codes.” Also *“Doors, windows, roof openings, vent openings...should be secured at all times.”* Relevant products may include access

gates, overhead security gates and lockable overhead insect doors, as well as other heavy-duty anti-personnel doors for areas considered a target for penetration.

Interior security

“Restricted areas inside the plant should be clearly marked and secured.” Also, *“Access to controls for airflow, water systems, electricity, and gas should be restricted and controlled.”* And *“Access to in-plant laboratory facilities should be strictly controlled.”* These guidelines essentially require a physical barrier (i.e. door or overhead door) between restricted and non-restricted sections of the plant (whenever a security guard is not present) to prevent non-essential employees and others from entering areas where saboteurs could have the most impact on plant and product.

Storage

“Controlled access should be maintained for all product and ingredient storage areas.” This likewise refers to doors or other means to prevent casual entrance into sensitive plant areas which, in this case, would normally have fairly large access openings between them.

Shipping and receiving

“Loading docks should be secured to avoid unverified or unauthorized delivery.” Fulfillment of this guideline will require delivery truck drivers to enter the facility through a single supervised point of entry. Loading dock doors will need to be down, locked and in good working order. If the doors need to be opened for ventilation purposes, a securable overhead gate or overhead screen door will need to be installed and locked in the down position to prevent entry through that door position.

Further, it is no longer acceptable to leave hollow metal service (man) doors propped open to ventilate areas or provide employees with easier access to the building. If ventilation is needed, a tamperproof screen insert—called a service door screen insert—should be used to maintain locked conditions until the visiting delivery driver is

identified and cleared for entry. Inward-swinging screen doors are not acceptable. They violate local fire codes because they cannot be opened quickly in panic situations.

The key to external security is to keep outside doors down and locked at all times or provide some type of screen doors, down and locked, when ventilation is needed. As it happens, this is precisely what a responsible Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program requires.

“By 2006, the Environmental Protection Agency will be done with [its] insecticide re-evaluation process and we will be done with many of the chemicals,” Zia Siddiqi, director of quality assurance with supplier Orkin, predicted in a recent article. The article also quoted Gaetan Lambiase of Ecolab, who noted that “in most food processing plants...the number one issue is rodents. Number two is cockroaches and number three is flies.” He elaborated that the receiving area, “where there are outside dumpsters and doors,” is the most common location of pest infestation.

Double duty

Heavy-duty, commercial-grade overhead screen door systems with locks or motor operators help food processors meet their non-chemical IPM objectives while securing the facility at the same time. To promote security, at least two manufacturers of these door types use a heavy-duty, stainless-steel wire mesh featuring holes of a size similar to aluminum window screens at home. The mesh (12 x 12 lines per inch) is the same grade stainless steel used in minimum-security institutions, creating an extremely powerful penetration barrier. Another smaller (30 x 30 lines per inch) stainless-steel mesh has been USDA-tested and deemed impenetrable to small classes of insects that infest flour, grain or rice products. These are important options to consider when looking for door products for security, ventilation and pest control.

The USDA Guidelines for Food Security provide proactive countermeasures for preventing entry by individuals wishing to contaminate or destroy food supplies. Look for similar guidelines to be issued by FDA, and by agencies regulating power, gas, international shipping and other areas related to the well being of our population and infrastructure.

Rick Brown is the vice president of sales & marketing for Rasco Industries, Inc., Loretto, MN 55357. He can be reached at 763-479-1144.