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Healthcare Facilities

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Update: Low-Energy Automatic Door Openers for Healthcare Facilities

BY KERBY LECKA

Last year we discussed how low-energy, swinging door operators help meet all U.S. and Canadian Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements in a variety of locations and provided some specific trends and applications driving their adoption. This year, let's take a look at recommendations for integrating low-energy door operators with access controls for Long-Term Care (LTC) Facilities - a segment of the Healthcare Facilities market with strong growth driven by the aging baby boomer population in the U.S.

There are more than 67,000 U.S. LTC Facilities currently available to serve some 40.2 million Americans age 65 and older. Of this population, some 70 percent can expect to require some form of long term care during their lives. By 2040, the U.S. population age 65 and over will double to 81.2 million or 20 percent (one in five) of the population. Added to this is the growth in dementia-related illnesses projected to nearly triple from 5.2 million today to 13.8 million by 2050.

The top features for specifying an automatic door in Healthcare and LTC Facilities are:

1. **Handicap Access**
2. **Safety/Security**
3. **Convenience and Ease of Use**

Security and Life Safety Considerations

Long Term Care (LTC) Facilities present unique security issues different from traditional hospital and healthcare facility security requirements. Patients/residents in LTC Facilities are more at risk to harm from their own actions like wandering, confusion and disorientation; from outsiders taking advantage of their frail and weakened conditions; or from their own aggressive behaviors. Of paramount importance to LTC Facilities is access and egress control to protect patients with dementia-related conditions. Extra care, attention and security is required.

Additionally, regulations are increasingly complex and liability claims have climbed in recent years. This makes the safety and comfort of LTC Facility residents a huge opportunity for those door hardware, security dealers and distributors, installers and system integrators willing to educate themselves in the skills, expertise and solutions needed to serve this market.

Many automatic doors are designed to integrate with a variety of electronic sensors, access control systems, electromagnet locks, electric strikes and exit devices for security applications. Automatic low-energy swinging doors are designed

for applications requiring ADA compliance or user convenience. These doors are usually available in three configurations:

- A single door that swings in or out and is left-handed or right-handed – most common
- A pair of doors that simultaneously swing in the same direction
- Double egress – a pair of doors that simultaneously swing in opposite directions

Low-energy swinging doors deliver a cost-effective alternative to meeting accessibility compliance – while still allowing the able bodied to manually use the swinging door. Low-energy operators can be retrofitted to existing doors for additional cost savings while providing universal accessibility.

Push Plates & Switches

Whether it's a single or double door application, there are a variety of ADA compliant push plates, wall

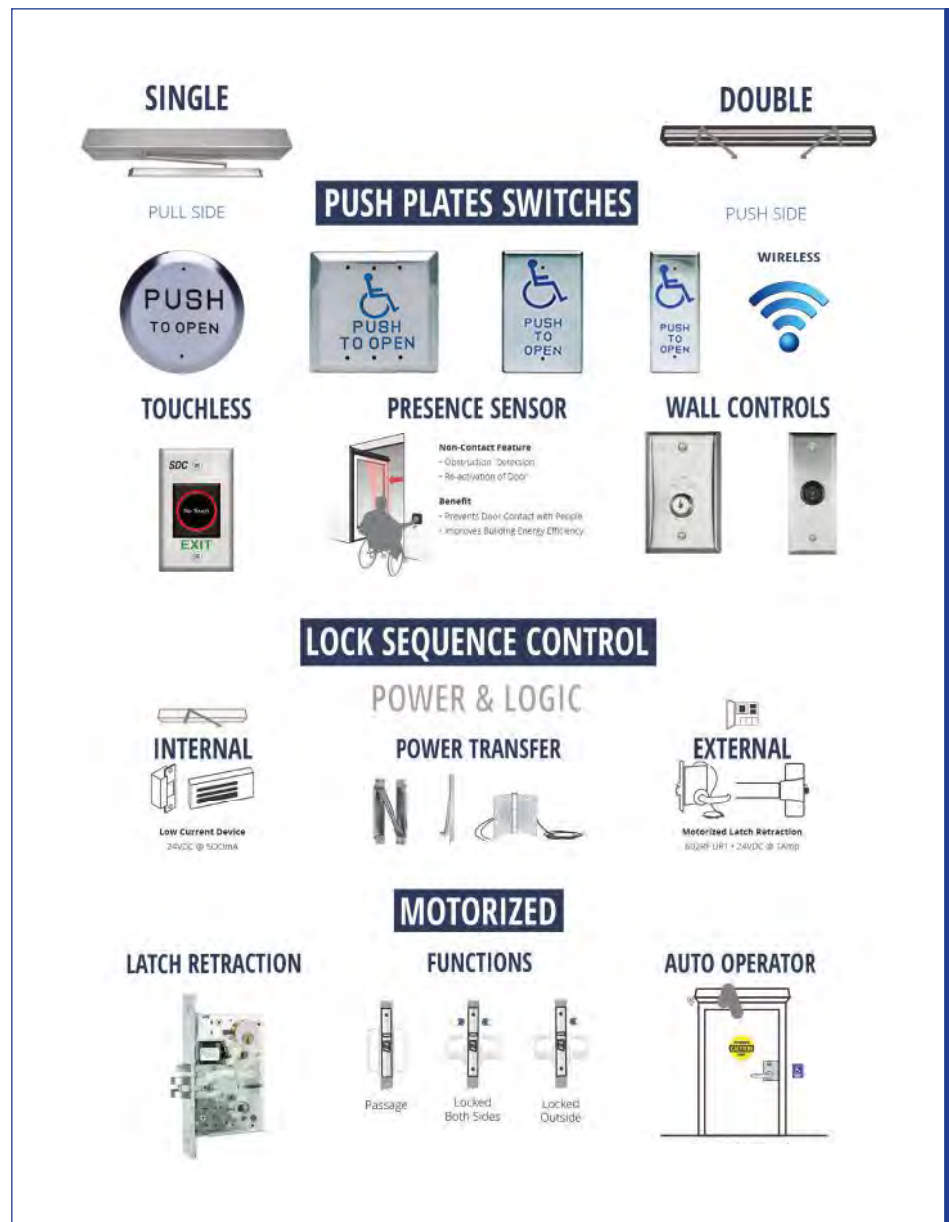
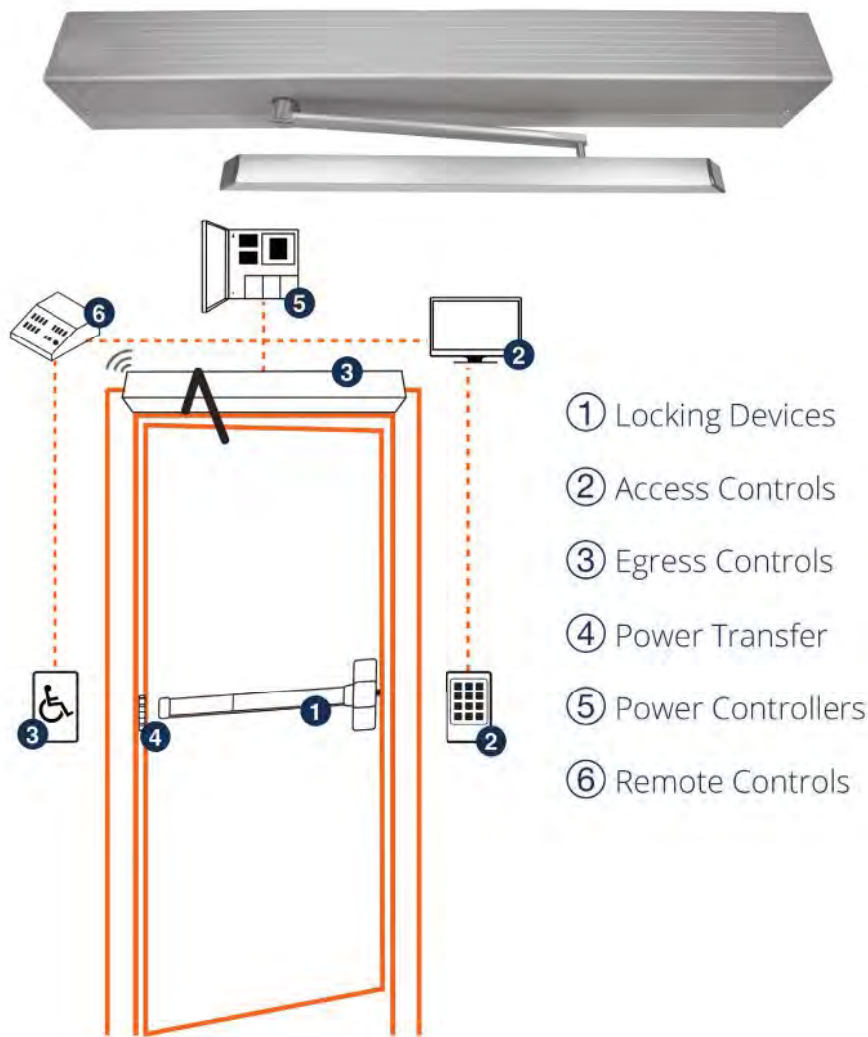


Figure 1: An overview of the categories of access control components suitable for integration with low-energy automatic doors, to create a comprehensive solution for virtually any door access and egress control requirement in a healthcare or long-term care facility.



More specific access control component types and functions that can be applied to door access and egress control with low-energy automatic doors.

switches presence sensors, even wireless controls that can be integrated with low-energy door operators to ensure quiet operation, security and positive patient experience. Infection prevention can also be addressed with wireless, touchless and passive infrared motion detectors to active door opening sequences.

Lock Sequence Control

Many things must be considered when selecting the proper controls for entering or exiting an opening with an automatic door operator. First, you'll need to determine what will provide appropriate security and life safety and

what codes will allow for each opening. The access and egress sides should be addressed separately. This may also impact your choice of power supply, power transfer, and logic control options. Passage may be restricted on one side but not the other. On designated fire exit doors and egress doors, codes will govern the type of acceptable controls. And, consideration must be given to after-hours access, safety and security for healthcare and LTC Facilities.

Considering Lock Sequence Control will ultimately guide you to the proper selection of access and egress control components for use with automatic

door operators, a separate article could be written just on the questions to resolve in the selection process. Here's a summary of questions to consider:

1. What service does the opening provide? Public Access? Private Entrance? Low-energy automatic door openings require coordination with lock control to ensure smooth door operation.
2. Should access be restricted? Day/night selection may also be desired.
3. Should egress be restricted? How should dementia patient control provide some degree of security without compromising life safety?

4. What is the frequency of use of the opening? Maintaining an unlocked cycle during heavy traffic, public hours may be required.
5. Is the opening a designated egress or fire exit door? As always, consult the local Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) for compliance requirements governing your Healthcare or LTC Facility door project.
6. How is ADA/handicap accessibility being addressed? You'll need to confirm how the type of traffic impacts your selection of access and egress control components.

Motorized Lock Alternatives

As always, new electrified design innovations are available in the market that are ideal for use with automatic door operator applications - like Motorized Latch Retraction Mortise Locksets. They ensure that the door stays latched even when de-energized, maintaining fire door integrity. Check with your favorite manufacturer or supplier for the latest motorized lock alternatives suitable for integration with low-energy door operators.

The preceding discussion has provided just a few of the many recommendations available for integrating low-energy door operators

with access controls. Professional practitioners of access and egress control solutions can be assured of consistent engagements and growth by simply addressing the use of low-energy door operators for healthcare and LTC Facilities. +



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