

How European Garage Doors Are **DIFFERENT**

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▲ Pass doors are common. New: 1" threshold.



A residential or commercial sectional overhead door is basically the same product worldwide. However, several differences make it impossible to exchange the European version with the North American door.

The basic design is similar. For example, both can make use of insulated sandwich sections, and both are generally guided in a 2" track system.

Key Differences

In Europe, the standard garage door includes angle-mounted vertical tracks with an integrated jamb seal. Since wood framing is not always common, we don't usually have climate seal or stop molding.

Instead of a graduated vertical track system, European doors typically have fully adjustable edge hinges. Finger-protected meeting rails on the sections are common, comprising about 80 percent of the market.

On industrial doors, compact gear-drive jackshaft operators are standard. In this market, there are virtually no trolley operators, even on normal headroom doors. Optical sensors inside safety edges and anti-drop devices are common safety features.

There are two kinds of anti-drop devices: one that protects against cable breakage and one that protects against spring breakage. Both are standard on industrial doors, but only the spring version is standard on residential doors.

Driven by Standards

The garage door in Europe is continually evolving to meet a higher quality standard. This constant improvement is driven by the European Harmonized



▲ Cell phones now open doors.

Standards, or CE norms, for doors and gates. The standards require third-party testing of certain performance standards that are posted for the end user.

These standards include wind load, air infiltration around and through the door, water penetration around the perimeter and between the sections, and the thermal insulation value (a calculated U-factor) of the door. These characteristics must be valid not only at installation, but also guaranteed for a life span of at least 30,000 residential and 100,000 commercial cycles.

At first the CE norms encountered major opposition in the market, but now, door companies see that even end users have become more aware of quality versus price. As a result of the CE norms, all door producers make a better product today, and the products are more objectively comparable.

European Trends

What is hot in the European market today? At recent door exhibitions in Europe, we've seen these product trends:

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◀ Tracks have an integrated jamb seal.



▲ **Stainless steel-framed windows are hot products.**

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• **Thicker sections.** Although 40mm (1.57") is still the standard, panel suppliers have introduced 50-, 60-, and even 80mm (3.15") panels. This change is being driven by "green sustainability"; that is, reducing long-term energy costs of the building envelope.

• **Pass doors** (wicket doors/walk-thru doors) are very popular in Europe, even in residential doors. Newest is the finger-safe pass door integrated in a finger-safe sectional door featuring a flat or low (1") aluminum threshold. This pass door was first introduced by Hörmann last year, and every supplier now offers it.

• **New technology.** New cell phone (GSM) modules can open a door anytime from anywhere simply by calling a certain number. Hard wiring for electrical safety devices (such as photo eyes) is being replaced by wireless technology. IR light curtains take door safety a step higher than the use of a single IR beam.

Coming Soon

The service and replacement market is now clearly recognized as a money-making opportunity. With an installed base of around five million commercial sectional doors, on which regular maintenance is mandated by CE norms, major global companies are developing strategies for after-the-sale maintenance and repair programs.

New European Union CE norms are coming. "Burglar resistance" is one of the principal subjects. When a building is more secure against burglaries, annual insurance fees decrease significantly. Of course, sectional overhead doors play a major part in this new home security trend. Stay tuned! ■



- **Greater visual appeal.** Section suppliers offer an unlimited range of finishes and colors including wood grains and mural art scenes. The market share for raised-panel designs is decreasing, while new designs with vertical grooves or high-tech flat panel styles are increasingly popular.
- **Accessories.** Stainless steel-framed windows in round, square, and rectangular shapes are trendy. Recessed illuminated lift handles with solar-powered LEDs have just been introduced. The addition of high-quality windows or other accessories can double the selling price of the complete door, but it does not stop homeowners from ordering them.

▲ **New: Illuminated lift handles with solar-powered LEDs.**

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