Door Security + Safety

DHI'S PUBLICATION FOR DOOR SECURITY + SAFETY PROFESSIONALS

AUGUST 2025

Multi-Use and Retail Facilities

INSIDE:

STAYING AHEAD OF THE INDUSTRY WITH NEW AND UPDATED BHMA STANDARDS

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Tech Tips highlights useful technology tips for door installation and service. If you have an idea for a Tech Tips article you want to submit, contact *Door Security + Safety* Editor Al Rickard, CAE, at *arickard@dhi.org*.

IN THE WORLD OF BUILDING CONSTRUCTION AND DESIGN, STANDARDS AREN'T JUST CHECKLISTS — THEY'RE THE FOUNDATION OF PERFORMANCE, SAFETY, AND QUALITY. IN THE BUILDERS HARDWARE INDUSTRY, ENSURING THAT PRODUCTS MEET CONSISTENT AND RELIABLE PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS IS ESSENTIAL.

The Builders Hardware Manufacturers Association (BHMA), accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) to develop and maintain standards for builders hardware in the United States, plays a crucial role in ensuring that hardware products meet these stringent requirements. As building practices evolve and technologies advance, so too must the standards that guide product development, performance, testing, and installation.

In line with this mission, BHMA recently published updates to six ANSI/BHMA standards, along with an entirely new standard focused on acoustic performance. These revisions not only enhance performance and safety requirements but also reflect the organization's ongoing commitment to keeping pace with adapting standards, technological change, and end user needs — including those of architects, code officials, and manufacturers.

With the newly revised standards now available, stakeholders can be assured they are working with guidelines that are accurate, clear, and aligned with current product applications.

UNDERSTANDING THE STANDARDS PROCESS

Before diving into the individual standard updates, it's worth highlighting the broader context in which these standards are developed and maintained.

Each ANSI/BHMA standard is a consensus-based document — shaped by industry experts, manufacturers, code officials, and user groups — that defines performance requirements for a wide range of builders hardware, including locks, hinges, exit devices, and access control systems. Standards are reviewed at least once every five years, and any needed revisions proposed are based on new technologies, field performance data, safety or performance concerns, and market demands.

Once revisions are complete, they are submitted for public review and undergo ANSI's rigorous canvass process to ensure each standard reflects a balanced consensus and meets national quality guidelines. This process helps ANSI/BHMA standards remain widely accepted, relevant, and trusted benchmarks for safety, performance, and durability.

SIX REVISED STANDARDS

The six updated standards address unique challenges and developments across multiple hardware categories — from life safety systems to residential security — and represent thoughtful improvements to the way products are evaluated, specified, and used in real-world applications.

ANSI/BHMA A156.3 – EXIT DEVICES

Exit devices are essential components of life safety systems, making accuracy and clarity within the standard vital. The updated ANSI/BHMA A156.3 includes several key changes to better define performance testing and streamline understanding:

- Flush bolt grades and mullion grades were added to sections 2.5 and 2.6, offering expanded clarity on product categories.
- In section 2.9, torque and time values were introduced to improve consistency in performance evaluations.
- Section 2.14 provides new guidance on when to use a new specimen after fixture failure, ensuring test integrity.
- A definition for "actuating paddle" was added in section 3.2.
- The sample selection chart in section 8.11 was reorganized and now includes auxiliary and panic devices.
- Sections 9.1 and 9.10 include an added dead latch effectiveness test, where applicable, before and after cycle testing.
- Additional updates include corrected metric conversions (section 11.4) and a new section (15) for removable mullion testing.
- Editorial changes throughout improve clarity and organization.

ANSI/BHMA A156.17 – SELF-CLOSING HINGES & PIVOTS

Self-closing hinges and pivots are often used in fire-rated openings and security doors. Their ability to automatically return a door to a closed position is vital for safety and privacy. Updates include:

- New hinge types were added for zinc and concealed hinges.
- Requirements for concealed hinges were introduced to enhance product coverage.
- Sections 5 and 6 were reorganized to reduce cross-referencing and improve the document's readability.
- An exception for hinges greater than 12 inches was removed, promoting consistent testing.
- Clarifications were made for door gauge positioning on 18-inch doors.
- These changes make the standard more user-friendly while considering today's product designs and real-world installation needs.

ANSI/BHMA A156.21 – THRESHOLDS

The revised threshold standard introduces new definitions and updates terminology to ensure alignment with industry and accessibility guidelines:

- New definitions for barrier-free thresholds and expansion assembly thresholds were added to section 3.1.
- Language was clarified in sections 3.4, 3.5, and 5.3, improving the interpretation of threshold requirements.
- References to barrier-free design were corrected in sections 6.5 and 6.6.
- Figure 1 was added to Section 4 to clarify testing requirements.
- Section 5.4.2 introduces a new saddle threshold type, and updates in 5.4.9 (A, B, C) align terminology with current industry nomenclature.
- The appendix was reorganized and updated to support easier reference.

ANSI/BHMA A156.35 – POWER SUPPLIES FOR ELECTRONIC ACCESS CONTROL

As electronic access control systems grow in popularity, the need for dependable, thoroughly tested power supplies has never been greater. The updates to A156.35 standard keep pace with technological advancements by adding tests and improving performance metrics:

- Section 8.2 now includes a new measurement point for voltage regulation tests, promoting more accurate data collection.
- Power supplies with battery backup test requirements were added to section 8.5. This new test ensures the power supply's control mechanism can protect the battery from being over drained (deep discharge) and allow it to fully recharge when battery backup is used. Without these protections, the battery backup system would be unreliable and have a shorter operational life.
- New test requirements for abnormal output were introduced for all power supplies, including those with multiple distributed outputs.
- The appendix was updated with editorial changes and language on the new voltage regulation.
- Overall content was reorganized and consolidated for improved flow and clarity.

With the newly revised standards now available, stakeholders can be assured they are working with guidelines that are accurate, clear, and aligned with current product applications.

As more buildings adopt advanced security systems, these changes ensure that power supplies used in access control systems are up to the challenges of modern building operations, including power interruptions and variable load conditions.

ANSI/BHMA A156.39 – RESIDENTIAL LOCKSETS AND LATCHES

The A156.39 standard now better reflects contemporary manufacturing and testing practices that support greater consistency and performance assurance for residential locksets and latches:

- Grade equivalencies were removed, allowing for more objective testing.
- Backset requirements were added to improve fit and function across different door styles.
- Testing and sample requirements were clarified, removing ambiguity from performance evaluations.
- Formatting issues and numbering were corrected throughout for a cleaner, easier-to-navigate document.

These refinements help manufacturers deliver more consistent, high-performance products for residential use.

ANSI/BHMA A156.40 – RESIDENTIAL DEADBOLTS

Like the lockset standard, A156.40 received updates that bring the standard in line with current product expectations and terminology for residential deadbolts:

Grade equivalencies were removed to eliminate potential confusion.

- Additional definitions were introduced to expand product variations.
- References to sections of the standard were updated, and editorial corrections were made throughout, including renumbering.

Together, the A156.39 and A156.40 updates create a stronger framework for residential security hardware.

NEW STANDARD PUBLICATION

In addition to these six revised standards, BHMA recently published ANSI/BHMA A156.42 – Acoustic Performance Rating for Operational Noise of Architectural Hardware.

This new standard addresses a topic that is becoming increasingly important in commercial design elements: noise. A156.42 establishes methods for evaluating and defining the acoustic performance of various types of architectural locking hardware, focusing specifically on the sound produced during normal operation.

By introducing standardized criteria for measuring operational noise, A156.42 adds an important new dimension to builders hardware performance, particularly in environments where noise reduction is critical — such as health care, hospitality, schools, and libraries. While the non-acoustic, mechanical, and electronic performance of these products is already defined in existing BHMA standards, A156.42 fills a critical gap by allowing specifiers and architects to quantify and compare sound performance across hardware categories.

By filling a gap not covered by other standards, A156.42 reinforces BHMA's commitment to evaluating both the functional and experiential aspects of builders hardware.

BHMA'S COMMITMENT TO INDUSTRY PROGRESS

BHMA's ongoing review, revision, and expansion of its suite of ANSI/BHMA standards demonstrates its leadership in a constantly evolving industry. As expectations rise around sustainability, accessibility, and user comfort, standards must evolve in tandem. BHMA's collaborative, consensus-driven approach ensures its standards remain relevant, technically sound, and practical for today's marketplace.

Through the careful review and update of existing standards — and the development of entirely new ones — BHMA continues to offer a framework for excellence in builders hardware. For manufacturers, specifiers, architects, and installers, these documents serve as essential references that uphold quality, safety, and innovation.

For more information or to purchase the revised standards, visit *www.buildershardware.com.*