

Smart Entrance Systems

A buyer's guide to choosing the right automatic door for user experience, accessibility, and operational efficiency

For most commercial buildings, the automatic entrance is the primary point of interaction with its occupants, visitors, and customers. The right entrance system improves access and manages pedestrian traffic while it supports security efforts and even helps reduce energy loss. Conversely, choosing the wrong entrance can create operational inefficiencies and increase maintenance costs. It might even expose owners to unnecessary liability.

Fortunately, today's automatic door systems offer more options and better performance than ever before. Advances in sensors, controls and materials make modern entrance systems significantly more reliable and capable than even previous generations.

Selecting the right system still requires looking beyond the door itself and evaluating how the entrance is intended to function throughout the life of the building. This guide, from the American Association of Automatic Door Manufacturers (AAADM), highlights five key considerations every owner, architect, and facility manager should evaluate before selecting their automatic entrance system.



Before selecting an automatic entrance system, consider:

- How will people move through the entrance, and how much traffic should it accommodate?
- What accessibility requirements apply to the building and its occupants?
- What level of safety, security and access-control integration is needed?

- How will the system affect energy performance and daily operations?
- Who will install, inspect and maintain the entrance throughout its service life?

Start with the application

“Before evaluating specific products, consider how an entrance will actually be used,” said David Pickers, Vice President of Direct Sales for Record USA. “A busy outpatient medical center has very different traffic patterns than a hotel, office building, school or retail store.”

The volume of pedestrian traffic, available wall space, security requirements, and building layout all influence which type of entrance is most appropriate.

Automatic sliding doors have become the preferred solution for many commercial buildings because they efficiently accommodate two-way traffic while creating an intuitive, hands-free experience. Swing doors remain an excellent option where existing architecture or limitations make sliding doors impractical. Folding doors are an effective solution when wall space is limited. The best choice depends not just on the door itself, but on how users will interact with it every day.



1. Accessibility for everyone

Remember, a building’s accessibility impacts everyone. Accessibility should be viewed not as a compliance exercise, but as an investment in customer service, convenience, and building performance.

“Visitors pushing strollers, travelers with luggage, employees carrying equipment, delivery personnel with carts, and individuals recovering from temporary injuries all benefit from automatic entrances,” said Pickers. “As the population ages, designing for these everyday situations is increasingly valuable.”



This broader perspective often changes the conversation from “Let’s check an accessibility box” to “What entrance creates the best experience for everyone who uses this building?”

In many retrofit projects, replacing a pair of manual doors with an automatic sliding door system can dramatically improve ease of access without significantly changing the building footprint. Plus, because much of a door project’s cost already resides in the glass, aluminum framing, and installation labor regardless of door, the addition of

automatic operating equipment may represent a relatively modest price increase. One that will substantially improve overall user experience.

2. Innovations that improve performance

Automatic entrance technology has advanced considerably over the past two decades. Manufacturers have enhanced door reliability via improvements to operator design, control systems, and component durability. Door systems have longer-lasting rollers and guide systems, sophisticated electronics, and enhanced diagnostic capabilities to improve reliability and reduce service requirements.

Sensor technology has also evolved. Modern presence and activation sensors respond more quickly, monitor wider detection zones, and provide greater accuracy.

“It’s easier than ever to integrate entrance systems directly with building automation and electronic access controls,” said Pickers. “Authorized users can enter with credentials after hours, with operators automatically returning the entrance to its normal operating mode once access has been granted.”

This level of integration supports broader building management strategies while remaining simple for occupants to use. For buyers, these innovations mean today’s automatic entrances deliver greater reliability, flexibility, and operational value than many systems installed a generation ago.

3. Safety and security

The modern entrance has become an important component of a building’s overall safety and security strategy. Safety has always been a crucial part of automatic door design, and modern entrance systems continue to build on decades of advances in sensors, controls, and operating standards.

Today’s systems continuously monitor pedestrian movement to help ensure doors operate safely under a range of traffic conditions. Properly designed entrances incorporate multiple layers of sensing technology that help detect approaching users and reduce the likelihood of contact during operation.

Building security is an important consideration across a wide range of building types. Schools, healthcare facilities, government buildings, and commercial offices may now expect entrance systems to support their overall security strategies. Modern automatic doors frequently integrate with electronic access control systems, enabling facilities to restrict access while still providing convenient entry for authorized personnel.

In some applications, entrance systems also incorporate specialized glazing or other security features designed to help protect occupants or property from certain environmental or security-related threats. These options should always be weighed within the context of applicable safety codes, ensuring that security enhancements do not compromise safe emergency egress.



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David Pickers, Vice President of Direct Sales for Record USA



4. Green initiatives and sustainability

As buildings operate with greater energy efficiency, entrances can play an important role in managing the building envelope. Modern automatic entrance systems incorporate improved weather seals, advanced glazing options, and more efficient operating equipment that help reduce unwanted air infiltration and maintain interior heating and air conditioning. Vestibules, properly selected door systems, and thoughtful entrance design can further improve heating and cooling efficiency.

“Manufacturers have also improved the efficiency of automatic door operators, reducing power consumption,” said Pickers.

Although the entrance represents only one component of an energy-efficient building, selecting the appropriate automatic door system can support sustainability initiatives and help reduce operating costs over the life of the facility.

5. Installation, maintenance, and the role of AAADM Certified Inspectors

Part of selecting the right entrance system is planning to take care of it. Proper installation, inspection, and maintenance are essential for safe and reliable long-term performance.

Even the most advanced automatic door can experience problems if it is improperly installed or incorrectly adjusted. “Installation should be performed by qualified technicians who understand applicable ANSI/BHMA standards and manufacturer requirements as well as local building codes,” said Pickers. “That generally means choosing an AAADM Certified Inspector, someone who has gone through training administered by the American Association of Automatic Door Manufacturers.”

Following installation, regular inspections provide necessary quality assurance. An AAADM Certified Inspector verifies that the entrance system has been inspected against the applicable current standards. This helps owners identify potential issues and document that the entrance has been inspected against the applicable industry standard.

Routine maintenance is equally important. Preventive maintenance helps identify worn components before they fail, minimizes unexpected downtime, and extends equipment life.

Regular inspections and daily safety checks also help an automatic door operate safely and consistently throughout its service life. Owners benefit from fewer service interruptions, lower operating costs, and greater peace of mind.



Choosing an automatic entrance system is about far more than selecting a door. It is an opportunity to improve accessibility, enhance the user experience, strengthen security, support sustainability goals, and reduce long-term operating costs.

“By evaluating how the entrance will be used, understanding the capabilities of today’s technology and working with qualified installation and inspection professionals, owners can select an entrance system that delivers reliable performance for years to come,” said Pickers. ■

AAADM is here to help

Regardless of what type of door best fits your facility’s needs, make sure you are contracting with a company that employs AAADM Certified Technicians to ensure your doors are installed to the ANSI 156.10 or ANSI 156.19 pedestrian safety standards. You can find a directory of AAADM members here:

<https://www.aaadm.com/member-directory/index.html>