

User report

Materials flow system with increased safety standards

Pilot project for IKEA Worldwide/ EFAFLEX high-speed turbo roll-up doors are used for the protection of goods conveyed at IKEA Frankfurt

Where utmost importance is attached to safety, specialists have to be called in: since preventing accidents is the top priority in all areas of our industry.

When considering pedestrian access, the highest level of attention and sensitivity are called for. Within the scope of a pilot project, IKEA Frankfurt has used the latest material handling technology in store. In order to safeguard this handling materials technology and therefore to protect, especially the youngest customers, IKEA has installed high-speed turbo roll-up doors of EFAFLEX.

“The worst thing which could happen to us would be an accident with a child being involved”, says Michael Geiger. As head of the logistics department of IKEA Frankfurt, he is, among others, responsible for the entire logistics and transport within the building.

Prior to being able to start with the construction of the store in 2005, IKEA planners and logistics faced a major challenge. Since the plot had a size of 58,000 m², the surface of the new building could only cover a maximum size of 38,000 m². “This is not much for a store with IKEA dimensions”, says Geiger. This limited floor space meant that the planners had to build upwards. And this was only possible by equipping the building with a conveying system which transports the products from the receiving area below the building to the sales floors which are located on higher levels – by passing ten receiving points.

“Therefore, we have developed a pilot project for IKEA Worldwide which transports the goods as quickly as possible to the receiving points and therefore also to the customer by means of the materials flow system.”

When using such a kind of system, it must ensure that neither employees nor customers are at risk. For protecting and closing the receiving points, the planners have chosen EFAFLEX doors. “We must close up the conveying system so that customers cannot enter these areas”, explains the head of the logistics department. “Therefore, these doors must open and of course close again very quickly. Children are our youngest customers, and it is just normal that they are very curious and agile. Conveyor belts and forklift trucks are exciting and thrilling for children”.

By installing EFAFLEX doors, the logistics experts at IKEA have broken new ground. Also other IKEA stores have already installed similar high-speed doors. “They are installed – among others – in forklift truck rooms and incoming goods departments”, says Michael Geiger.

The first IKEA store was opened in Älmhult (Sweden) in 1958. Since IKEA came to Germany by opening the first store in Eching near Munich in 1974, the Swedish group opened another 43 stores in Germany until the end of last year. At present, there are 285 IKEA stores in 36 countries worldwide. In the financial year 2008, more than 100 million customers visited in IKEA stores in Germany. In Germany alone, 13,600 employees are developing the business idea of Ingvar Kamprad which is to offer a wide range of stylish and functional furniture and home products at prices which are so competitive that many people can afford them.

The IKEA assortment comprises 9,500 products. Bringing all these products from the receiving area to the customers requires quick and secure transport systems. The pilot project in the IKEA store in Frankfurt-Niedereschbach has been proven after a test run over one year. “Meanwhile, the plan is defined as a standard”, says Michael Geiger.

The implementation of safety standards specified by IKEA as well as the compliance with the legal safety requirements has top priority.”

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