

Folding Arm Awnings

This document has been produced by the British Blind and Shutter Association (BBSA) to highlight the key characteristics of folding arm awnings to help you make an informed choice when buying your awning.

The product characteristics detailed below represent the state of the art and any relevant standard.

General

Folding arm awnings installed to a wall which have no other support are sun shading products and are not designed to be used in wet or windy conditions.

When fully extended the arms used on a folding arm awning are typically not straight, this is to allow them to bend slightly to cushion wind loads.

The minimum pitch of a folding arm awning is typically 14 degrees to allow for any water that may have gathered unexpectedly to run off. Water gathering on the cover can result in damage to the cover itself or the arm supports.

Wide projection awnings or those with multiple arms are best motorised as they require a lot of effort to retract manually.

Fabrics

Awning fabrics have some specific characteristics. These are explained and often shown pictorially in the fabric swatch selectors from which you will make your fabric choice.

Some designs of striped fabric are irregular. This can lead to the first and last stripe across the width of the cover being different and off centre. The seams in the fabric are used to compensate for this.

Due to the way folding arm awnings are constructed, the cloth can only be held under tension between the roller and the fascia. As a result, the lateral hems may fall inwards, thereby causing trough-shaped sagging of the fabric to the centre. This effect is generally referred to as "dishing".

Wind Loads

Wind loads are to a greater extent absorbed by the fabric, and to a lesser extent transferred to the awning structure. To protect the awning structure and the cloth, awnings must be retracted when the wind speed exceeds the wind resistance class stated by the manufacturer.

If operated automatically, any limits set on the sensor must not be changed. Some wind sensors may not work unless the awning is fully extended.

Shade Cover

The amount of shade created by an awning is determined by the location and orientation of the property in question, the position of the sun, and also the height, angle and overall size of the awning.

Installation

To ensure a secure fixing, special brackets (spreader plates) may be required.

On bungalows a folding arm awning will need to be raised to ensure the correct height clearance. This will result in a gap between the awning and the building.

Planning Permission and Conservation

It is the responsibility of the customer to ensure there are no planning/conservation restrictions which would prevent the installation of an awning.

Motorisation

There is a wide range of motorised solutions available for your comfort and convenience and each system will have its own characteristics. Some points to consider are:

- **Speed and alignment:** Due to mechanical and electrical tolerances, awnings in the same installation may not travel at the same speed and may not line up if stopped during the travel of the awning.
- **Noise:** Being operated by a motor, some noise will be emitted. Quiet motors may be available.
- **Wiring:** Some surface wiring may be required. Where 240V mains power is involved, a competent person will be required to provide a power feed unless the blinds can be powered from a plug inserted into an existing socket.
- **Motor protection:** For safety reasons, most motors are fitted with a thermal cut-out to protect them from getting too hot (usually from over-use). When cooled sufficiently, the motor will start working again.

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Visual Product Inspection

When checking the visual characteristics of awnings, the following should be observed:

Viewing distance and lighting

3m for exterior products in diffuse daylight.

Viewing angle

Perpendicular to the surface being checked.

Viewing aids

Naked eye (and any corrective glasses if applicable).

Always ensure you read and carefully follow the operating and maintenance instructions.