



Lifts and hoists

Lifts and hoists are used for transporting people and goods between floors. If they are properly designed and maintained, there is relatively little risk to the people using them. However, there can be a much greater risk to the person who services and repairs the lifts.

By law, most lifts must be thoroughly examined by a competent person. The examination is carried out to find out if the lift can continue to be used safely. A written report of the examination has to be made and given to the owner of the lift. If the examination has revealed that repairs are needed, the report must say this and give time limits by which the repairs have to be made.

Passenger lifts must be examined every six months and goods lifts every 12 months, or as set out in an examination scheme drawn up by a competent person based on an assessment of the risks.

The lift should be regularly serviced by a reputable maintenance company (about every three months). The service report provided should relate to the efficient working of the lift and does not replace the thorough examination mentioned above. Any repair work identified should be done as soon as possible.

The safety steps given below will reduce the risk of accidents caused by or in lifts, and you may find them useful as a safety checklist.

- Step 1** Make sure that the lift is thoroughly examined by a competent person (generally this will be an engineering surveyor) and carry out any repair work which may be needed.
- Step 2** Make sure that the lift is regularly serviced by a reputable company. The maintenance contract should include removing rubbish from the lift shaft as it may contribute to the risk of a fire.
- Step 3** Develop a system for rescuing people trapped in the lift. If this is going to be carried out by your staff, you should provide training on this procedure. Written rescue procedures should be displayed at appropriate places.
- Step 4** Make sure that the alarm bell in the lift can be heard by people who know what to do if it rings.
- Step 5** Make sure that there is suitable lighting on all lift landings to reduce the risk of people tripping or falling. Make sure that there is emergency lighting in the lift, which will come on if the mains power fails.
- Step 6** Make sure that the door to the lift plant room is secured and locked to prevent unauthorised access. A notice explaining that access is restricted should be placed on the door. The key to the plant room and the lift landing doors should be kept in a secure place, controlled by a responsible person, and be available at all times.
- Step 7** Make sure that unauthorised people cannot open the landing doors to the lift shaft unless the lift is level with the landing floor.
- Step 8** Tell people not to use the lifts during a fire evacuation, by putting up warning notices at lift landings and around the building, and using the public address system where available.

Case Study

Stockroom workers in a large department store regularly used a makeshift key to open the lift shaft to find out where the lift was. On one occasion, a shop assistant walked through the unattended, open landing doors expecting the lift to be there. She fell into the lift shaft and broke her leg.

For more information

Thorough examination and testing of lifts - Simple guidance for lift owners INDG 339 ISBN 0-7176-2030-1 available on HSE's website at www.hse.gov.uk