



LEIA Safety Information Sheet

Guidance on the Release of Trapped Passengers by Non-Lift Personnel

Prepared by the LEIA Safety and Environment Committee



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PREAMBLE

This Information Sheet is one of a series produced by the LEIA Safety and Environment Committee on topics relevant to the Lift and Escalator Industry. Whilst every effort has been taken in the production of these sheets, it must be acknowledged that they should be read in conjunction with the relevant legislation, codes of practice etc. They should not be taken as an authoritative interpretation of the law but guidance to it.

INTRODUCTION

Increasingly, it is considered that the release of trapped passengers by the lowering or raising of the lift car should only be undertaken by a trained lift engineer or the Rescue Services. In some circumstances e.g. gearless lifts, lifts with bi-directional safety gears, machine-room-less installations etc., it is even more strongly recommended that only a lift engineer should undertake this activity.

The risks to those persons being rescued (and potentially the rescuers) increase when rescue of trapped persons is underway. There are obvious risks of falls into the lift well during rescue (a number of previous incidents supports this) as well as the potential for the machine to move in a way not anticipated by the occupants or poorly informed rescuers (with an obvious hazard of shearing or crushing injuries). The potential harm to occupiers or rescuers could be considered high and even fatal.

Release of Passengers from a Lift Car

The use of unsafe release procedures will expose trapped passengers in a lift to far greater risk of injury than leaving them in the lift car until competent persons are in attendance. Attempts by persons other than those competent to effect a release is likely to result in serious injury to those persons and/or passengers being released from the lift car.

The procedure of releasing trapped passengers (commonly referred to as “shut in lift” by the rescue services) is often referred to as ‘Emergency Release of Lift Passengers’ however in most circumstances the passengers are not usually at risk as the lift car is stationary and the occupants protected by the lift car enclosure. Therefore, although there may be a predictable urgency in effecting their release the situation does not merit the term ‘emergency’ but requires the controlled intervention of a competent person. It is advisable that lift companies bring this point to the attention of the client, so that client or lift owner can include this consideration in their own risk assessment of the situation.

Trapped passengers should only be released within the Door Unlocking Zone¹ unless there are exceptional circumstances which dictate other methods. The additional hazards this introduces must be assessed.

The risk assessment should also establish the suitability or otherwise of the site conditions including safe access and egress, sufficient space, falls at height hazards, any unguarded machinery, the correct function of those parts of the lift equipment necessary to carry out safe release, the ability to communicate with others involved in the release procedure etc.

Regulation 5(1)(d) of the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 requires employers to ensure that any person trapped in a carrier (e.g. lift car) is not exposed to danger and can be freed. By following the Approved Code of Practice, a duty holder would be considered to be complying with the law by having a reliable means of rescue and that persons trapped within a carrier are not exposed to risk.

¹ See Definitions

Considerations for the Client or Lift Owner

- Safe release should hardly ever be approached as an emergency because in nearly all circumstances it is a controlled situation. It can only be controlled when those carrying it out are fully trained and competent.
- The client should never use a person who has not been trained and is unable to demonstrate the necessary level of competence. The use of untrained personnel will put both them and the trapped persons into a dangerous situation.
- Trained personnel must be reminded that they should only be undertaking safe release on the lift/s on which they have been trained.
- Trained personnel must be instructed that if they cannot remember or do not understand what to do they should not undertake the release procedure. They are to make that known to their employer and, if appropriate receive further training.

Where the equipment [identified, for use in the training session] to effect the release does not function correctly they should cease any further action and contact their employer/ lift company.

The client will need to check their own liability insurance to ensure there is sufficient coverage for passenger release by their own personnel.

Safe Release Training

Training and Release procedures should be in accordance with BS7255, and the manufacturer's instructions.

Note: LEIA Members may well decline to carry out training for clients where their own risk assessment indicates an unacceptable risk to either trapped passengers or rescuers.

For any clarification on this information sheet contact LEIA or your lift maintenance contractor and your own source of competent Health and Safety Advice

DEFINITIONS:

Lift engineer: Lift engineers should have a minimum qualification of a Level 3 NVQ Diploma or its equivalent in an appropriate discipline.

Trained person: A person suitably trained and qualified by knowledge and practical experience, and provided with the necessary instructions, to enable the required work or task to be carried out safely.

Door Unlocking Zone: The area from 200mm above to 200mm below the door opening within which the automatic landing door unlocking mechanism will function.

NATIONAL STANDARDS

1. BS 7255: 2012: Safe working on lifts.
2. BS EN 13015: 2001 Maintenance for lifts and escalators-Rules for maintenance instructions.