



Lift & Escalator Owner News

Subject: Identifying lifts for fire service use/ evacuation lift types

Introduction

As an owner or duty holder of buildings with lift(s) you, as the responsible person, are required to undertake regular reviews of your fire risk assessment. This guidance offers guidance on the different types of lifts and on having the types of lifts identified.

Building Environment

The incorporation of lifts for fire service use and evacuation into buildings depends on many elements of building design which are specified in standards such as BS 9991:2015; *Fire safety in the design, management and use of residential buildings – Code of practice* and BS 9999:2017; *Fire safety in the design, management and use of buildings – Code of practice*, and guidance to Building Regulations. Checking that these essential building/ environment requirements have been provided should be done by the responsible person for the building. Please also see also our article [Inspection, maintenance, thorough examination and supplementary testing of lifts for use by firefighters and evacuation lift.](#)

Lift operation in the event of fire

The identification of the specific type, and checking the detailed features and operation of the lift, is a specialist activity which should be undertaken only by competent lift personnel. This identification is likely to be an important element in classifying the type of lift as part of the buildings responsible person's fire risk assessment e.g. using documents such as PAS 79.

Lift operation in the event of fire falls into three general categories, covered by different British Standards:

1. Lifts intended for fire service use (including firefighters lifts, fire-fighting lifts and firemen's lifts);
2. Lifts used for evacuation of disabled people;
3. Lifts which are neither intended for use by firefighters nor for evacuation which are simply removed from service from a fire alarm signal or recall switch.

Other, especially older, lifts may not have any of these operational features. There may also be bespoke lift solutions, especially for evacuation, where other solutions have been specified and approvals obtained. These are outside the scope of this article.

1. Lifts for fire service use (including firefighters lifts, fire-fighting lifts and firemen's lifts)

Over many years, the specification of lifts for use by firefighters has evolved with some older types not usually now considered to be adequately protected to be used by firefighters. A guide to the types and standards is included in BS 8899:2016; *Improvement of fire-fighting and evacuation provisions in existing lifts – Code of practice* which is referenced from PAS 79. Of particular use are the definitions and Annex B; *Past provisions for lifts with operation in the event of fire* which describes the following.

- **Firemen's lift** - lift installed before fire-fighting lift standards were made available, incorporating only simple means to recall the lift to a designated floor, with no complex lift controls or protection measures for fire and rescue service. These were described in BS 2655-1 which required a "Fire Control" switch and BS 5655-1 which required a "Fire service" switch. Firemen's lifts were superseded by "fire-fighting lifts" to BS 5588-5:1986.
- **Fire-fighting lift** - lift which has protection, controls and signals which enable it to be used under the exclusive control of the fire-fighters, but that are less stringent than those of a firefighters lift. These were described in BS 5588-5, which was first published in 1986 and required a "Firefighting lift" switch. "Fire-fighting lifts" were superseded by "firefighters lifts" with the publication of BS EN 81-72:2003 and BS 5588-5:2004.
- **Firefighters lift** - lift which has protection, controls and signals which enable it to be used under the exclusive control of the fire-fighters. These were first described in BS EN 81-72:2003 and BS 5588-5:2004. A firefighters lifts switch is marked with the firefighters pictogram which must only be used to identify firefighters lifts.
- **Modernized lift for fire service use** - lift primarily intended for passengers use which has been modernized with at least the basic additional protection, controls and signals measures that enable it to be used under the direct control of the fire service. It is preferred to upgrade to the level of a firefighters lift in BS EN 81-72:2015/2020 but where this is not practicable, BS 8899 defines acceptable deviations for existing lifts and an identification label at Figure 1 of BS 8899:2016.



Note: BS 8899 is not applicable for new firefighters lifts which should be to BS EN 81-72. It is not appropriate to upgrade a lift to a "fire-fighting lift" standard as explained in our [Are You Aware 79; Improvement of existing lifts for use by the fire services](#).

Where a lift for fire service use needs to be classified, a full check of the lift features using BS 8899, Annex A; *Survey of existing firefighters lift features* and Annex B; *Past provisions for lifts with operation in the event of fire* should be undertaken by a competent person. Annex A lists environmental/building requirements which are outside the usual scope of the lift and lift personnel competence so must be checked by the building's responsible person.

2. Lifts used for the evacuation of disabled people

An evacuation lift which is to be taken under the control of building management and used for the evacuation of disabled people is described in BS 9999:2017; *Fire safety in the design, management and use of buildings – Code of practice*. The specification of an evacuation lift has changed very little over many years and, although there is work looking at the future specification of evacuation lifts and their operation (see our article [evacuation lift standards](#) for more), BS 9999:2017, Annex G is currently the only description of an evacuation lift in British Standards.

Where an evacuation lift needs to be classified, a full check of the lift features should be made based on BS 9999:2017, Annex G or using BS 8899:2016, Annex C; *Minimum provisions for lifts used in the evacuation of disabled people* and Annex B; *Past provisions for lifts with operation in the event of fire*. Environmental/building requirements and building management aspects are outside the usual scope of the lift and lift personnel competence so must be checked by the building's responsible person.

3. Lifts which are removed from service from a fire alarm signal or recall switch

British Standards for the fire safety of buildings such as BS 9991 and BS 9999 recommend that lifts which are not required to operate in the event of fire (lifts other than for fire service use and evacuation lifts) are recalled and taken out of service according to BS EN 81-73. This allows lift passengers to leave the lift cars and the fire and the rescue service to be able to readily check them upon arrival. See our article on [recall of lifts in the event of fire](#).

BS 8486-9: *Lift features for emergency recall conforming to BS EN 81-73* should be used as the basis to record the checks made.