

Lift & Escalator Owner News

Subject: Use of firefighters car key switches

It is normal practice that a lift designed to be used by firefighters to be readily available at the fire service access level, after receiving a signal as described in BS EN 81-72, 5.8.7. This signal can be initiated automatically, typically from an external signal provided by the building fire alarm and detection system, or manually. After receiving this signal and arriving at the fire service access level the lift would be retained at the fire service access level with the doors open and only be allowed to function by the fire and rescue services once the lift has been entered into Phase 2 as described in BS EN 81-72; 5.8.8.

BS EN 81-72 describes that where an external signal is provided, phase 2 would be initiated when the firefighters lift switch, located on the fire service access level, is operated from '0' to '1'.

Standards that have been adopted in the UK as a designated standard, can contain a national foreword which can be used to state and explain any concerns about its content, as well as, offering advice and guidance on the application of the standard in a UK context.

The National foreword of BS EN 81-72:2015 included the following:

Assumption k) in the Introduction relates to the possible provision of a firefighters car key switch. The usual practice in the UK is not to fit a firefighters car key switch. Provision of such a key switch would be subject to agreement with the fire and rescue service as part of negotiation.

BS EN 81-72:2020 has identical technical content to the 2015 revision, which references assumption k) within the introduction, however, the 2020 revision has a standard basic National Foreword that does not reference the above guidance. It is our understanding that this was an oversight and that the guidance detailed in the 2015 National Foreword remains applicable.

The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) have reviewed their position regarding the requirements of the use of a car key switch and that their position is that firefighters lifts should be designed and installed in full conformity to BS EN 81-72, including all elements of the 2015 National Foreword and that no firefighters car key switch is installed without negotiations and agreements are in place.

BS EN 81-72 is currently under review and may include changes to the technical requirements. Where a new standard is published the National Foreword will re-instate clear guidance to ensure the use of a firefighters car key switch remains under negotiation and agreement with the fire and rescue services.

Approved Bodies are reluctant to approve firefighters lifts deviating from BS EN 81-72 without approval from the fire and rescue services.