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Safety Matters

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Introduction

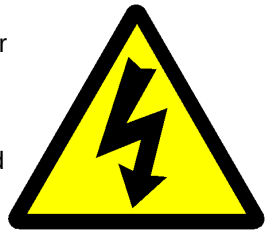
Welcome to the January 2012 edition of Safety Matters.

Through this newsletter our aim is to inform you of health and safety issues that may have an impact on the Lift & Escalator industry. Safety Matters is also available for download from the LEIA member's website. www.leia.co.uk

Industry Accidents

Near miss involving a standby generator

During a lift refurbishment project part of the work involved replacing the existing electrical isolator for the lift. The contractor involved correctly identified that the incoming supply required isolation and this was carried out in conjunction with the client. The only way to isolate the supply was by removal of fuses from a remote distribution board – this was done, supply verified as dead using isolation procedures, a warning notice placed at the distribution board and the fuses retained by the contractor. The existing isolator was replaced with a new one with the incoming cables coiled inside for collection later. A short time after, another contractor visited the building to routinely check the standby generators. When he started them up the cable in the isolator became live, arched on the earthed metalwork blowing a hole in the casing and starting a small fire. It is fortunate that the isolator was not being worked on at the time as someone could have been electrocuted. The investigation showed that the isolation was not adequate due to the incorrect direct connection of the generator to the lift supply which had gone unnoticed for years. The client had insufficient information and had not passed this on to the contractor who was unaware of the existence of a generator.



Lessons learned

Enquiries must be made of the existence of standby supplies which may not be obvious from a survey of the machinery.

It is preferable that this is done at the planning stage of the work so that methods can be defined to ensure all supplies are completely isolated so that work can be carried out safely. It is worth remembering other supplies may exist in a lift installation, most notably the lift car lighting supply, which will remain live after the main isolator has been switched off and which will require separate isolation.

Safe Site Access

An incident has occurred to engineers accessing the machine room through a manhole hatch in a ceiling. The manhole was raised to allow access. As it was heavy, lifting was assisted by a hydraulic ram fitted to the cover. As the engineer was passing through the hatch, the ram sheared from its fitting on the hatch surround and came down catching the engineer's fingers. He was not badly injured, but was more than 3 days off work, which made the incident reportable under RIDDOR. The maintenance of the hatch and the ram was the responsibility of the client (the premises owner) and this incident highlights the need to always report incidents, near misses or close calls to your supervisor. LEIA can use this information to press the Safety Assessment Federation (SAFed) and their members to include incidences of unsafe access in their LOLER reports to clients, with recommendations for improvements.

Manual Handling

The LEIA Accident Statistics for 2010 were published in November and show that the biggest cause of injuries to lift and escalator engineers was manual handling, resulting in sprains and strains to backs, legs, groins, necks and arms. To avoid manual handling injuries you should follow the advice in the Lift and Escalator Site Safety Handbook:

- Know the load (estimate the weight if not marked)
- Check your route
- Lift using stronger muscles in your legs, not the weaker ones in your back
- Get a firm grip, with a proper stance over the load
- Do not twist when lifting, carrying or placing the load
- Use lifting and moving aids where possible – sack barrows, trolleys, rolatrucks etc.
- Get help where possible

Many injuries were caused when lifting items from vans. This is especially hazardous because headroom might be limited, the object might not be close at hand and the area may be congested with other things. Think about the lifting process before you lift – don't dive in a rush to get the job done quickly. Keep warm. If your muscles are cold they will not work effectively.

Training

Asbestos Awareness Training Works

Two companies (non lift companies) and a contractor were recently prosecuted for releasing asbestos fibres during an office refurbishment project. A series of failings were revealed which included the removal of asbestos insulating board and then (AIB) from a lift shaft. The situation came to light when the lift engineers arrived on the site and found pieces of AIB spreading around the shaft. They correctly refused to carry on working. High levels of asbestos fibres were found to be contaminated on several floors and work was stopped on the site by HSE Inspectors until the building had been completely decontaminated. The individual lift engineers and their company are to be congratulated for taking the course of action they did. In so doing they prevented possible further harm to persons in the building.

CSCS Cards News

It is several years since the Industry Accreditation (Grandfather Rights) was withdrawn for lift and escalator personnel. Many of you will be coming up for renewal and may be wondering about the worth of retaining the card, especially if you have not been asked to show it recently. If you allow your card to lapse and need to apply for a new one for a job in the future, you will have to provide evidence to CSCS of an NVQ Qualification appropriate for the card. Many engineers have been caught out by not renewing their card when it becomes due and being unable to do so without an NVQ Qualification. The CSCS card is a personal qualification (even though your employer might pay for it) and it is your responsibility to renew the card.

Also on CSCS cards: there is a new question set being introduced which will become compulsory in April. You will have to view a CSCS video 'Setting Out'. Part of the question set is a series of scenarios about work on site where your answer to one question will determine the emphasis of the next question. You will be allowed one incorrect answer from these scenario questions but no more or you will fail. Have a look at it on the Construction Skills website: http://www.cskills.org/supportbusiness/healthsafety/setting-out.aspx. The Setting Out video is available on this site for free download and viewing. A new book is also published with the new questions in it.

Environment

Environment Agency Consignment Notes

At the last Safety Forum, there was a presentation by the Environment Agency on the use and application of consignment notes for transport of hazardous waste within the Lift and Escalator Industry. Consignment notes are used to provide that you and your employer are dealing correctly with any hazardous waste that is produced as part of your work. If you produce hazardous waste (and this can include waste oil, contaminated machinery and rags and defunct mercury switches or fluorescent tubes) then you should be preparing a consignment note that details the type of material, where it was produced, where it is going to and what will be the next stage in its life before reuse, recycling or disposal. A consignment note is made up of three copies, one for the initial holder of the waste (the client) one for the waste produced (your company) and one for the final disposal company. If you regularly produce particular types of hazardous waste, the consignment note can be pre-completed for each type so you only need to fill in the locations of production and disposal. As long as all the required information is recorded, the consignment note can be produced electronically so you do not have to produce lots of paper copies of the same information.