



Lift & Escalator Industry Association

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SAFETY INFORMATION SHEET

CONTROL OF LIFT ACCESS AND RELEASE KEYS

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.

This information sheet is principally for the attention of owners and operators of passenger lifts or vertical lifting platforms, for persons with impaired mobility.

Passenger lifts and vertical lifting platforms are typically provided with release keys to allow the lift landing door to be opened; either in an emergency situation or during maintenance or inspection work. **Keys are the responsibility of the owner or manager of the lift.**

It is of the utmost importance that door release keys are held securely by the building manager or similarly responsible person, to prevent any unauthorised interference or tampering with the lifts. They should only be handed over to suitably trained and authorised persons.

Opening of the landing door when a lift car or platform is away from the floor is highly dangerous and exposes building occupiers to potential falls which have previously resulted in death and serious injury.

Use of the release key is not necessary during normal operation of the lift. **If it is being used regularly then something is wrong and the practice should stop immediately.** The lift owner or manager should seek assistance from their contracted lift maintenance company.

The use of the key must be strictly limited to suitably trained and authorised persons, typically lift operatives. It is never intended that they be used by untrained persons within the building where the lift is situated.

Control of the key is important and return of the key should be noted. Ideally the key should be signed for on issue and return. Lift owners and managers should note that lift operatives working on a passenger lift or vertical lifting platform are recommended to report any abuse or inadequate control of lift keys to the lift owner or manager and to their own line manager.

The release key should carry a warning label; an example is shown below. It must still be kept safe and secure and only released to suitably trained and authorised people.



Example of sign to be secured to the door release key

The Health and Safety Executive have issued a Safety Bulletin concerning potential falls from height risks to employees and members of the public from over-riding door locking safety devices:

‘Organisations which have such vertical lifting platforms or lifts installed should review their procedures to ensure that emergency door release devices are not routinely operated during non-emergency situations. Emergency unlocking should be undertaken only in exceptional circumstances and by suitably trained and authorised people.

Safe working procedures and arrangements should be in place setting out what to do in the event of an emergency or failure. For example, how to deal with trapped people and the arrangements for repairing faults.’

Link to full Safety Bulletin:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/safetybulletins/liftingplatforms.htm>