



# Lift & Escalator Owner News

**Subject: Calls to Fire Service to release passengers shut-in lifts**

## **Background**

Every year the fire service attends thousands of non-emergency calls to release passengers shut-in lifts. This takes them away from attending emergency calls. The fire service is not required to attend non-emergency calls such as where a person is shut in a lift car, but is in no immediate physical or medical danger.

The fire service may charge for non-emergency lift calls as they are entitled to recover costs from building or lift owners for attending these.

Fire service guidance makes clear that maintenance and non-emergency lift releases are the responsibility of the lift owner/ responsible person, who should also ensure there is a two-way voice alarm system fitted so that a shut-in passenger can raise the alarm.

## **LEIA Guidance**

As long ago as 2009, LEIA advised that the fire service may charge for attending lift rescues and warned about the problem of the fire service being called to lifts. It was found that a small minority of lifts were responsible for the large majority of calls.

The fire service might receive a call to attend a lift for a number of reasons:

1. A shut-in passenger uses a mobile and calls 999.
2. The lift alarm system is programmed to call 999. Since 2012, BS 7255 *Code of practice for safe working on lifts* has made clear this should not be done.
3. The lift maintenance company which would usually attend to release shut-in passengers cannot attend a call out as quickly as the client requires. We caution lift owners against unrealistic expectations as lift maintenance companies are not a “blue light” rescue service and are bound by traffic regulations and other constraints.
4. Lift owners think people shut-in in a lift is an emergency. Lifts are designed to be safe for passengers even when stopped due to malfunction. Usually passengers shut-in a lift car are in no immediate danger and are only exposed to hazards if they attempt to self-rescue or their release is attempted by someone not trained and competent.

## **Lift owner responsibilities**

The lift owner/ responsible person should arrange for the safe release of passengers shut-in a lift car. This is usually met by having an agreement with a lift maintenance company for the maintenance of the lift and for attendance to release passengers shut-in the lift car.

Even in the case of calling out the fire service, a lift owner should call their lift maintenance contractor for assistance – the fire service will often leave the release of shut-in passengers to them.

The lift owner/ responsible person should also ensure that a working two-way voice alarm system is working so that people shut-in a lift can call for help. There is more guidance on this on our website at: <https://www.leia.co.uk/publications/leia-newsletter/>