



Lift Owner News

Subject: Is it a legal requirement to connect a telephone lines to a lift?

There has been a requirement to fit alarm devices to lifts since 1 July 1999 under the Lifts Regulations to allow trapped passengers to call for help. Similar alarm devices have also been fitted to many new enclosed lifting platforms and many older lifts as an important improvement for the safety of passengers.

To meet this requirement, many lift companies supply an auto-dialler to BS EN 81-28 (the standard for new alarm systems) designed to work on a "plain old telephone system" line to meet this requirement. Some alarm devices might use the line voltage to power them so avoiding the use of a power supply and backup supply. Some alarm devices might need a dedicated line to allow identification of the lift with the alarm.

However, there is no requirement to connect alarm equipment only to a hardwired telephone line connected to the public switched telephone network. Provided that the alarm communication and management requirements are met then communication means can be, for example: radio, digital phone network, optical, hard wired within a building or site to a permanently manned rescue service.

So although there is no legislation which says that a telephone line must be used, there is legislation which effectively requires that the level of safety of a lift must not be reduced. So, where an alarm device has been provided, the lift owner must ensure the connection is maintained or, if replaced, is compatible with the alarm device used.

Some types of installed alarm devices might not be compatible with digital lines or voice over internet protocol (VoIP) or might need some adjustment to allow them to work. If looking to change the type of connection to the lift alarm device, owners are advised to seek the assistance of their lift maintenance company who would check with the original alarm device provider that their device will work with the type of line proposed and will continue to be compliant with the standard to which it was installed e.g. BS EN 81-28.

If the alarm device is changed, perhaps to be compatible with a new line, care should be taken to ensure the new system is at least to an equivalent level of safety. Since alarm systems might also have been installed for the top of car and the pit, these should be retained unless shown through risk assessment that there is no risk of a person being trapped in these areas.

BS EN 81-28, the standard for new alarm systems, is being revised and will include a feature to alert in the car if the communications link has been lost. It is the owner's decision on the action to be taken in case 2-way communication is out of order, e.g. remove the lift from service or provide some other alarm service as a temporary measure.

Similarly, owners of lifts without alarm devices would be well advised to consider carefully how trapped passengers could call for help and potential liabilities for them as owners in the event of a prolonged entrapment.