



S₂ Partnership Ltd
Intelligent Risk Management

Fire Safety Briefing Note

Firefighting Lifts & Fireman's Lifts

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Introduction

More often than not, firefighting lifts and fireman's lifts are confused with one another; however, it is important to recognise the difference between these two types of lifts and how they operate in different ways.

This briefing note has been written to help the Responsible Person(s) identify the type of lift fitted within their property and the correct testing and maintenance regimes to be adhered to.

Additional information on the action to take in the event that the Responsible Person(s) is unsure as to the type of lift within their property is also provided.

Firefighting shafts and firefighting lifts

Firefighting shafts are provided in larger buildings to help firefighters reach floors further away from the building's access point. They enable firefighting operations to start quickly and in comparative safety by providing a safe route from the point of entry to the floor where the fire has occurred.

A building with a storey more than 18m above the Fire and Rescue Service vehicle access level should have one or more firefighting shaft containing a firefighting lift. Access to a firefighting lift must be via a protected firefighting lobby.

A firefighting lift is defined as per Approved Document B of the Building Regulations, as follows:

'A lift with additional protection and with controls that enable it to be used by the fire and rescue service when fighting a fire.'

A firefighter lift, unlike a normal passenger lift, is designed to operate so long as is practicable when there is a fire in parts of the building. The primary function of a firefighting lift is to transport firefighters and their equipment to the scene of a fire with the minimum amount of time and effort. It may also be used to help evacuate less mobile people (dependant on personnel on-site to assist).

Firefighting lift(s) should not be used to evacuate person(s) as part of a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP's) due to the fact that the lift must be operated under the control of the fire safety manager or a delegated representative, or otherwise by someone trained and authorised in the use of the lift (person(s) contracted to work on behalf of the landlord) as per BS 9999.

The lift may be used in normal times as a passenger lift by the occupants of the building but, in order to prevent the risk of the entrance being obstructed when the lift is required to go into the fire-fighting mode, it is essential that it is not used for moving refuse, nor for moving goods. In buildings provided with a single lift, its use for the transport of goods needs to be avoided unless essential, lift lobbies need to be kept clear, and when the lift is used for moving goods, it is essential that the doors are not propped open.



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A firefighting lift must have each of the following:

- A secondary back-up power supply to make sure that it continues to operate in the event of power failure to the building
- Lift control system
- Lift communication system.

Firefighting lift installations must conform to BS EN 81-72 and BS EN 81-20.

Testing and maintenance of firefighting lifts in accordance with BS EN 81-72 / BS 9999;

- Operation of the firefighters lift switch (**typically weekly**) to check the lift returns to the fire service access level, parks with its doors open, and that the lift does not respond to landing calls
- If the lift is connected to a building management systems of fire detection system, check to make sure that the lift responds to the instruction from the BMS or detection system
- Simulation of a failure of the primary power supply (**typically monthly**) to check changeover to the secondary supply and operation from the secondary supply. If the secondary supply is from a generator, it should energize the lift(s) for at least 1 hour
- A full test of the firefighters lift operation (**typically annually** and arranged by the Responsible Person with the lift maintenance contractor) from the firefighters lift switch and BMS/ detection system, operation from the secondary power supply to check the full firefighting facilities, including communication systems. This should check to make sure the lift can be driven to any required floor and that on arrival at a floor it only opens its door when instructed to do so and then stays at the floor with its doors open
- Checks of building-related issues, including measures to prevent water ingress into the lift well and/or measures to address water ingress into the lift well and the operation of any pumps used to control the level of water in the lift pit.

The lift maintenance contractor should make the annual test as requested by the Responsible Person (Facilities Manager for the site) and record the correct operation of all aspects of the firefighters lift(s) including communication systems. The lift maintenance contractor should also:

- Advise the Responsible Person of any need to change components or parts of the lift to ensure the availability and reliability of the lift in the event of fire
- Advise the Responsible Person of any change in standards relating to lifts in service; particularly to lifts for operation in the event of fire.

An action identified from the Grenfell Tower inquiry for residential buildings was for owners and managers of every high-rise residential building to be required by law to carry out regular inspections of any lifts designed to be used by firefighters in an emergency, and to report the results to their local fire and rescue service monthly.

While thorough examination and maintenance of lifts is already required by law, this is the first time the recommendation to report the result of inspections to local fire and rescue services is being made. Although this is currently a recommendation and has not yet been implemented, Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick has said that the measures would be put into law after a consultation.



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Fireman's lifts

Typically, fireman's lifts are provided in older, less complex buildings. A fireman's lift forms part of a regular passenger lift with a 'fireman's' override control switch provided at ground floor level. The override switch is used by the attending Fire & Rescue Service to assume control of the lift(s) once they have returned to the ground floor.

Fireman's lift(s) should not be used to evacuate person(s) as part of a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP's) due to the fact that the lift must be operated under the control of the attending Fire & Rescue Service.

The operation of the override control switch may be via the following:

- A break glass
- Crescent switch
- Yale key switch
- Triangle key
- Budget key
- Via drop key (most common).

The use of these override systems has evolved over many years and their actions can vary from one building to another. The most common effect is to override all floor calling and to return the lift to the floor where the fireman's switch is located (typically ground floor level). Control of the lift is purely through the lift cars buttons.

In comparison to firefighting lifts, a fireman's lift will not have the same structural protection, control and communication systems or secondary back up power supply.

Testing and maintenance of fireman's lifts in accordance with BS 9999;

The operation of the fireman's lift switches should be **tested once a week** and should be repaired or replaced if found to be faulty.

Confirmation of type of lift

In the event that there is confusion as to what type of lift is provided within a building, the contractor appointed to maintain the lifts within the building must be instructed to provide formal confirmation as to whether the lift is a firefighting lift or a fireman's lift. This information must be kept on-file or in the fire logbook for future reference.

How can we help?

The S₂ Partnership has a dedicated team of [fire safety experts](#), who can provide fire risk assessments, training, guidance and fire safety management systems to a range of organisations to meet legal obligations. S₂ keeps abreast of the latest changes in regulations and works with clients to develop robust fire safety solutions, providing just the right support to each individual business to protect lives, buildings and businesses.



S₂ Partnership Ltd
Intelligent Risk Management

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