

Health and Safety Authority highlight dangers with lifts

The recent fatal accident in August involving a goods lift in a pub/restaurant is a reminder of the need to take adequate precautions in the use of such machinery. The Health and Safety Authority is asking employers to ensure that all lifts on their premises are in a safe condition and are used safely. The Authority are also asking staff to make sure that they use lifts safely and follow any instructions, training and warning signs.

Employers in all sectors should be aware that passenger and goods lifts including pavement hoists and dumb waiters, are subject to detailed requirements set out in chapter 2 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations, [S.I No.299 and 732 of 2007].

Lifts must be thoroughly examined by a competent person every 6 months after which a written report must be completed.

The Report of Thorough Examination must include:

1. The name and address of the employer or owner for whom the thorough examination was made.
2. The address of the premises at which the thorough examination was made.
3. Particulars sufficient to identify the lifting equipment including, where known, its date of manufacture.
4. Date of this examination and date of the last thorough examination if known.
5. The safe working load of the lifting equipment or, where its safe working load depends on the configuration of the lifting equipment, its safe working load for the different configurations that have been determined.
6. The purpose of the examination including examination before putting into use for the first time, examination after installation or after assembly at a new site or in a new location, examination after repairs or alterations and periodic examination.
7. In relation to every thorough examination of lifting equipment—
 - a. identification of any part found to have a defect which is or could become a danger to persons and a description of the defect;
 - b. particulars of any repair, renewal or alteration required to remedy a defect found to be a danger to persons;
 - c. in the case of a defect which is not yet but could become a danger to persons—
 - i. the time by which it could become such danger;
 - ii. particulars of any repair, renewal or alteration required to modify it;
 - d. the latest date by which the next thorough examination must be carried out;
 - e. where the thorough examination included testing, particulars of any test;
 - f. identification of parts not accessible for examination.

8. The name, address and qualifications of the individual making the report and, where appropriate, the name and address of the individual's employer.
9. Where appropriate, the name and position of a person signing or authenticating the report on behalf of its author.

Any corrective actions identified in such reports must be safely completed within the specified timeframes (section 7 above). If the thorough examination shows that a lift poses an immediate danger; it should be taken out of use until it can be properly repaired and made safe. All servicing and repairs to lifts must also be carried out by competent persons who are experienced in dealing with this type of equipment. Reports of such examinations shall be kept available for inspection by a HSA inspector.

Goods lifts should not be used for carrying passengers unless they meet all the requirements for passenger lifts. All employees should be clearly instructed on the dangers of inappropriate use of goods lifts. Lifts which are not designed for lifting persons shall be clearly marked to this effect.

Employers are required to maintain a register of lifting equipment which shall also be kept available for inspection by a HSA inspector.

Employers who currently have either passenger or goods lifts on their premises should ensure that they have undergone the required thorough examination and that the risks associated with the use of such lifts are addressed in the Safety Statement to ensure that these risks are controlled.

Details of the legislation can be obtained from Government Publications or online at www.irishstatutebook.ie or www.hsa.ie

In summary, the Health and Safety Authority are asking all employers who have lifts to make sure the proper controls are in place. In particular:

- Ensure lifts are thoroughly examined every six months,
- Ensure any works required are safely completed,
- Ensure reports are kept available for Inspectors, and,
- Take all necessary steps to ensure people never travel in goods lifts. (unless they meet all the requirements for passenger lifts.)