

THE RESCUE COMPANY

ELEVATORS, PART 3

The most challenging of all elevator incidents is the removal of victims who are caught between the elevator and the hoistway door or hoistway shaft. Such situations could arise from accidents involving elevator maintenance personnel or some youthful game playing with elevators. Victims' hands, feet, or other body parts or entire bodies can be caught between the car and hoistway.

There are guidelines that you can use no matter how large or small the incident. On arrival at the scene, conduct a size-up to answer the following questions before implementing a game plan: Where in the elevator hoistway is the victim located? Is it a single-car or multicar hoistway? Is it a blind shaftway, and if so, where are the required openings located? Can you open a hoistway door near the victim's location to get a closer look at the situation? (In many instances the position of the victim's body blocks the hoistway door.) What will be the most advantageous location to work from? In multicar hoistways, will

it be possible to use an adjoining car to get to the victim?

What is the victim's condition? Is he conscious, can he converse with rescuers, and will he be able to assist in his rescue? Does he need immediate first aid? Are medical personnel at the scene? If so, will they be able to conduct patient assessment? (Note: In operations involving deceased victims, speed is not as important when compared with operations involving a seriously injured victim.)

How is the victim caught? In which direction was the car moving prior to the accident? Is the power to the elevator shut down? How much clearance do you need to free the victim? Can you move the elevator car without further injuring the victim? Is an elevator mechanic at the scene?

Having a qualified elevator mechanic at the scene will be of great assistance during the rescue operation. He will be able to tell you if the elevator can be moved up or down, how much clearance you can gain, what parts of the car you can remove to gain additional clearance, and how he can move the elevator car from the machinery room. Cooperation and coordination between rescuers and the elevator mechanic is essential.

Every elevator incident is unique. Draw on your experience from previous incidents.

Safety is a prime consideration for both rescuer and victim. Be sure to secure safety lines to everyone work-

ing in hoistways. Provide adequate lighting. Have medical personnel standing by. Leave a member at the power shutdown location. Provide communication between the machinery room and the incident location. Use only trained and experienced rescue personnel and only the necessary number—don't expose members to unnecessary dangers.

ELEVATORS AND FIRES

Fires can occur in the elevator car, in the hoistway, at the base of the hoistway shaft, and in the elevator machinery room. During fires in elevator shafts and assemblies the main power supply must be shut down and all elevator cars checked for occupants. If fire conditions permit, it is best to empty all cars of occupants prior to shutting down the power.

Grease fires involving the cables or machinery on top of the elevator cars are very common. Rubbish accumulation at the base of the hoistway shaft is often the source of these nuisance fires.

The biggest problem resulting from elevator fires is the smoke condition. A rubbish fire at the base of a hoistway shaft can send smoke billowing up the shaft, into the elevator car, and out onto the floors serviced by the shaft. These rubbish fires have resulted in mass evacuations of office buildings.

If a fire occurs in the machinery room, use caution if the fire is electrical in nature. It will be necessary to

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use Class "C" extinguishers (for electrical equipment). You will need a charged handline to protect members and to use in the event that the fire is not electrical.

Fires within elevator cars themselves are not as common because there is very little to burn inside the car. Most are due to carelessness involving smoking and rubbish or are incendiary in nature.

USING ELEVATORS DURING FIRES

Fire operations originating in apartments or offices can have a serious effect on elevator operations. You must use caution so that runoff water doesn't enter the elevator hoistway shafts. Elevator components (electrical and mechanical) can be seriously affected by heat and water. Erratic car movement can result from water or heat damage. You can use salvage covers to prevent runoff water from entering the shafts.

Consider walking up to the fire floor when the fire is below the 10th floor. It may take a little longer, but it will ensure your safe arrival. With today's emphasis on physical fitness, firefighters should not have any problem walking the 10 floors.

When using elevators, always plan on getting off at least two floors below the fire. Always have a means of communication when using elevators, whether it is the elevator car telephone or intercom system. At least one member in the elevator car should have a portable radio. In the event that the car stalls, you can inform the incident commander.

If you suspect that an elevator car may have been affected by the heat of the fire, use another car. If possible, use an elevator that services the floor involved but that would not be affected by water or heat. When using an elevator, test it by stopping at intervals of five to seven floors to be certain that the car is working properly. If you encounter any problems, stop the elevator at the next floor, get

off, and use another elevator or walk up to the fire floor to access.

Never overload the elevator—allow for the extra weight of turnout gear, hose, and tools. You may need forcible entry tools if the car becomes stuck and you must force open the elevator car door. You also can use the tools if you arrive at a floor and find the hoistway door secured, preventing egress.

Always check the location of the nearest stairway in relation to the elevator. If conditions change rapidly, you may have to use the stairs.

Some elevators are equipped with a special Firemen's Service. This service allows fire personnel to control the elevator. A special key returns all elevators to their terminal point. In some systems the activation of a smoke alarm or sprinkler automatically returns all elevator cars to their terminal point. Such systems are usually identified with special markings, indicating that they are for use by fire department personnel only. The regulations, requirements, and restrictions that apply to this special Firemen's Service vary according to municipality, town, city, and state. Fire department personnel must have a working knowledge of these systems. Hold orientation programs involving fire personnel, building security, and maintenance and elevator employees to familiarize them with the system's capabilities and limitations.

Training sessions on elevator operations during fires or emergencies should be a required part of every department's training program. You can arrange with elevator companies to have your members attend sessions to gain a working knowledge of their elevators. Some elevator companies provide training tapes. Housing complexes with numerous elevators often provide training drills for fire personnel and also may provide the special tools or keys needed to open their elevator doors. Building owners should equip rescue personnel with the necessary tools and knowledge to handle elevator incidents. ■

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