



Through Floor Lift Installations in Domestic Properties



Introduction

Today, more elderly and disabled persons with mobility difficulties are choosing to stay in their family homes. To make this possible, properties often need to be adapted. Through-floor vertical lifts are an example of aids available to enable disabled persons, who are often wheelchair-bound, direct access from floor to floor.

It should be recognised though, that through-floor vertical lifts are not appropriate to meet everyone's needs. It is always advisable to speak to an Occupational Therapist to discuss your needs when considering this type of adaptation. You can contact the Occupational Therapy Department on 01983 534520.

The aim of this advice sheet is to provide guidance and recommendations for addressing the potential fire safety issues which may result from the provision of such lifts. General principles are outlined, but as each situation is likely to be different, the guidance should be interpreted using sound professional judgement based on the particular circumstances.

Having required the assistance of a lift to reach the bedroom, it is likely that the occupant would be unable to escape unaided from the dwelling via the staircase in the event of a fire. In addition, the ceiling aperture created for the lift effectively removes the fire separation between the bedroom and lounge or other ground floor access point.

Accommodating the occupant wholly at ground floor level should be a first consideration whenever possible. However, this may not always be practical or acceptable to the occupant, and if a through floor lift is to be installed consideration needs to be given as to how the potential dangers highlighted above can at least be partially mitigated.

The following recommendations set out the minimum general standards for through floor lift installations in domestic properties. This is based upon the provision of a temporary place of safety at the head of the lift, so that in the event that an occupant is unable to make their escape in the case of fire, they can remain in a place of relative safety until they are able to be rescued. However, each situation is likely to be different due to factors such as the layout of the property, the mobility of the occupant and any assistance available. A risk assessment should therefore be carried out and this guidance may then be varied accordingly.

Recommendations

- 1) The floor in which the lift aperture is created should have a minimum half hour standard of fire resistance. Where necessary, an existing floor can be upgraded to achieve that standard.
- 2) The lift should provide a half hour fire resisting, smoke stopping seal to the lift aperture when the lift is stationed at the upper level.
- 3) The fire resistance of the doors to the rooms connected by the lift should be a nominal half hour standard, and it is essential that the occupant ensures that these doors are not left open.
- 4) A fire detection and alarm system of the appropriate grade and type should be provided throughout the dwelling, and the system must be mains powered with a battery back up, with all alarms / detectors inter-linked. The alarm should be clearly audible in the bedroom and loud enough to arouse a sleeping occupant. In addition, the warning system should be able to identify if there is a fire in the room containing the lift at ground floor level, in order that the occupant upstairs does not attempt to

use the lift in such circumstances. If the occupant has impaired hearing, consideration should be given to the need for special vibratory or visual alarm devices.

- 5) The bedroom should have an opening window of suitable dimensions for rescue and escape purposes. The unobstructed opening should be at least 0.33m² and at least 450mm high and 450mm wide, although it may be necessary to provide a larger opening, depending upon the particular circumstances. The bottom of the window opening should be not more than 1100mm and not less than 900mm above the floor, and the window should be situated in a position suitable for rescue by ladder.
- 6) A means of contacting the emergency services from the bedroom should be provided, such as the provision of a telephone extension with a line direct from outside, or a mobile phone if this can be relied upon at all times.
- 7) The occupant should be advised to have a personal emergency plan to follow in case of fire. The plan should cover what to do if they discover a fire, action on hearing the fire alarm and arrangements for immediately calling the fire brigade (particularly important where they are unable to get out unaided).
- 8) The installation of a residential sprinkler installation should be given serious consideration, as this would significantly increase the occupant's safety in the event of a fire, as well as reducing damage to the property.
- 9) Contact should be made with the Community Fire Safety Department who will be willing to assist in evaluating risks and discuss the emergency escape plan.

Please note that the provision of a through floor lift will require the submission of an application under the Building Regulations, and Listed Building Consent will also be required if the property is on the Listed Building Register.



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