

# Operations Corner

## Making Sense of Elevator Inspections

By Theresa Keysar

Understanding the elevator testing process may be challenging with one property, but managing multiple buildings in different jurisdictions the process can be confusing, to say the least. Elevators need to be inspected for several reasons. The primary purpose is to ensure public safety. Individual states and jurisdictions require that elevators be inspected and tested at least once a year. The integrity of an elevator and the elevator shaft are critical elements in the fire safety of a building and can affect firefighting techniques of the fire department. Code requires that elevator inspectors be properly trained and certified. Elevator owners are responsible for making arrangements with qualified inspectors to have their elevators inspected and tested.

There are two components to the process that results in the issuance of a certificate of inspection: inspecting equipment (Third Party Qualified Elevator Inspector TPQEI or State Inspector) and testing equipment (Licensed Elevator Mechanic). Inspecting is one component required by the elevator code. This is to be performed by a QEI certified inspector, confirming compliant equipment safety functions. Testing is another separate component required by the elevator code and is performed by a licensed elevator

mechanic, demonstrating compliant equipment safety performance operation. The testing procedures for each state are as follows:

### Washington, DC

- The property hires a third-party inspector to be present all during tests.
- Hydraulic elevators get an annual pressure test.
- Traction elevators get an annual no load test and every 5th year get a full load test.
- DC locations require the 3rd party inspection company to do periodic testing six months after the annual test. This is the responsibility of the 3rd party inspection company and the building owner. Note: your elevator company is not present for this test.
- Fire life safety is tested during elevator inspection with fire service company annually.
- Building fire service recall is required to be tested monthly.
- The emergency generator is tested during elevator inspection with electrician or generator company annually.

### Maryland

- The property hires a third-party inspection company.
- Hydraulic elevators get an annual pressure test.
- Traction elevators get an annual no load test.
- Every 5th year, traction elevators get a full load test with a 3rd party inspector present.
- Life safety is tested during elevator inspection with fire service company annually.
- Building fire service recall is required to be tested monthly.
- The emergency generator is tested with electrician or generator company during full load testing and with Maryland state inspector present.
- Recent changes to Maryland code, HB 1107 significantly changes the witnessing requirement. As of October 1, 2018, a TPQEI is required to be physically present during the testing of an elevator unit. This requirement is phased in as follows:



- Beginning October 1, 2019: Annual and five-year inspection of elevators owned by state or local governments will transfer from the state to TPQEI who will witness the test.
- Beginning October 1, 2020: Annual inspection tests of privately-owned elevators will be witnessed by TPQEI.

The law also eliminates the requirement for a third-party pre-final (compliance) inspection. The state will retain final acceptance inspections (new installations), alterations, investigation of accidents, complaints, incidences, follow up inspections to confirm the corrective action, and systematic/random quality control monitoring inspections, of third-party QEI inspectors.

## Virginia

- The property hires a third-party inspector to be present during all tests. (Depending on location you may be assigned a third-party inspection company).
- Hydraulic elevators get an annual pressure test.
- Traction elevators get an annual no load test and every 5th year get a full load test.



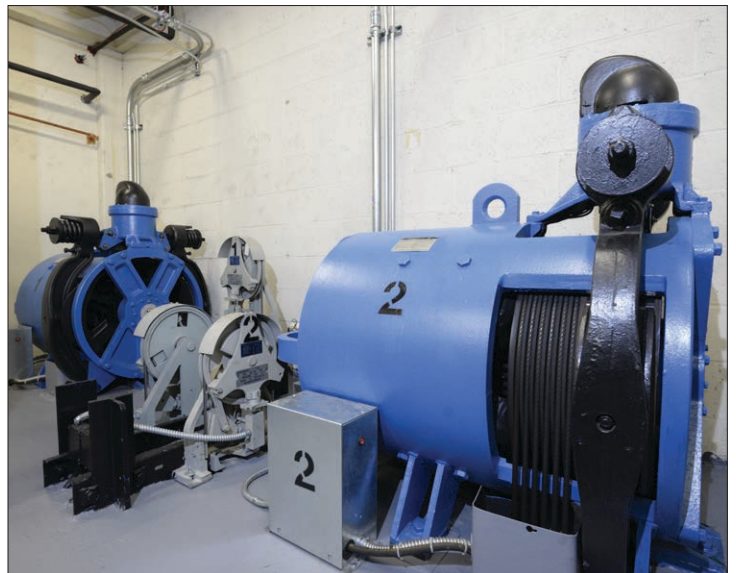
- The emergency generator is tested during elevator inspection with electrician or generator company.
- Fire service is tested by county fire marshal yearly.
- Building fire service recall is required to be tested monthly.

## Maryland, Virginia and Washington, DC

When testing is complete, before the inspector leaves your property, make sure that all your elevators are running normally. This does not happen frequently, but every once in a while, we receive service calls that the elevator inspector left and the elevator now does not run. Most commonly, the inspector has accidentally left a stop switch pulled or forgot to turn the unit on automatic operation before leaving.

It is important to note the following:

- You must pay the annual fee to the State or you will not receive a certificate.
- The elevator inspector does not send the inspection report to your elevator contractor.
- After any violations are corrected, you must file the report with the state.



If the elevator inspector finds something and writes up a violation on his report, they will submit this report to the building owner or property manager. If you receive this report, you must send a copy to your elevator contractor so that they can help resolve the issues.

When your elevator service provider corrects the violation, the technician will sign the report saying that this item has been corrected. The building owner or property manager then takes this report and submits it to the State. Depending on the seriousness of the violation, the inspector may choose to come out and perform a re-inspection, or the inspector may wait until the following annual inspection to verify the items have been completed. After your violation is corrected, you must file the report with the state.

If you do not resolve your elevator violations, your elevator can be shut down by the elevator inspector. If the violations are not resolved in the period requested by the state, you risk getting your elevator tagged out of service by the elevator inspector. Repeat violations increase the risk of a tag out. It is a long and involved process to remove a state inspector tag out, and will likely result in weeks of costly downtime, loss of production and/or angry tenants.

## Ways to Keep your Elevator Compliant

When the elevator inspector comes to your building, the objective is to make sure that the elevator is operating safely for all building occupants. Some items can be taken care of by you and are best practices to keep your building safe:

- Elevator machine room or penthouse door should be self-closing and self-locking. This is preventing unauthorized personnel or children from entering the room and potentially getting injured or worse. This is outlined in the building code and will be written up by the inspector.
- Elevator machine room lighting is adequate, in good working order, and with proper bulb guarding, if required. There are many hazards to a poorly lit room, and this can be written up by the inspector.
- Elevator machine room cannot be used as a storage area. We have seen building maintenance or tenants stack material or furniture in the elevator machine room. This is a fire hazard and will be written up by the inspector.
- If possible, find out the phone number to your elevator phone line, and the service provider. Your elevator contractor will not be able to check your elevator phone operation if there is no service to the phone line.
- Make sure that there is a fire extinguisher in the machine room.

A good preventative maintenance program should help keep write-ups to a minimum. Most items are easily correctable and no cause for alarm. To avoid a fine from the State, do not allow a lapse in inspections. Also, make sure your elevators are getting tested monthly for fire service recall, phones and proper documentation is available in the machine room or designated area.



### About the Author:

Theresa Keysar is the Director of Marketing & Business Development at Warfield & Sanford Elevator Company, an independently owned and operated elevator company that provides maintenance, service and modernization, on all types of equipment from vintage to today's most complex. For more than a century Warfield and Sanford has been providing its customers the most experienced service the industry has to offer.