

Shut in lift – attendance reduction policy

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Owner: **Assistant Commissioner, Fire Stations**
Responsible work team: **Central Operations**

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This document details the policy for reducing the number of attendances to release persons shut in lifts. Appendix 1 provides background information to the policy.
- 1.2 The policy has three main components:
 - (a) Borough and area level engagement with the lift owners to encourage them to improve maintenance and provide a suitable release service.
 - (b) Call filtering by Brigade Control to reduce the number of calls that we attend and the number of attendances made as an emergency.
 - (c) Charging the lift owners for non-emergency lift releases at premises where we repeatedly attend shut in lift incidents. This aims to provide an incentive for lift owners to improve lift maintenance and release arrangements.
- 1.3 This policy gives details of these three components. A summary of each component and the main responsibilities of participants are given in the main body of the policy and more detail is given in the appendices.
- 1.4 Information about the shut in lift policy available to the public can be found on the London Fire website at <http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/ReducingLiftCalls.asp>.

2 Owner engagement

- 2.1 The area DACs will ensure that borough commanders and area staff work together to encourage lift owners to improve their maintenance and release arrangements but the Brigade will not enter into any commercial agreements with a lift owner for the provision of routine (non-emergency) lift release.
- 2.2 Area staff and borough commanders will work towards reducing the number of 'Shut in Lifts' calls by:
 - (a) Identifying high call premises.
 - (b) Identifying the owners of high call premises. Use and maintain a lift owner database for each area. A list of the unidentified owner 3+ call premises can be sent to borough commanders so that they can help identify the owners.
 - (c) Contacting high call owners and encouraging them to reduce their calls. This would usually be arranged by the borough commander.
 - (d) Recording the contact with the lift owners. Contact at borough level should be recorded and copied to the area team.
- 2.3 The Head of Data and Improvement will provide borough commanders and area staff with statistical data to help them identify the high call premises. The current definition of a high call premises is a building where we made three or more lift releases within the previous twelve months.

3 Mobilising and call filtering

- 3.1 Appendix 2 details the mobilising policy. Call filtering aims to reduce the number of attendances made and the number made as an emergency. Call filtering involves Brigade Control officers questioning the caller to determine:

- (a) If the lift occupant is likely to be seriously ill (a medical emergency¹) in which case the Brigade will immediately respond to make an emergency attendance.
 - (b) If no one is in imminent danger and the Brigade is told that the lift owner's routine release arrangements are not available or do not exist, we will then attend at normal road speed. The Brigade does this in order to prevent a possible future emergency.
 - (c) If no one is in imminent danger and the Brigade is told that there are other arrangements available to make the release, in which case it does not attend.
- 3.2 The meaning of "seriously ill" is open to interpretation on a case by case basis but any illness that requires immediate medical treatment (e.g. an ambulance) would come into this category. If the lift occupant cannot be contacted or the urgency of the situation is in doubt then the control officer will default to the emergency mobilisation. The policy does not identify an acceptable length of time for someone to be shut in a lift. The length of time that a person is confined in the lift is not, on its own, reason to send a Brigade attendance.
- 3.3 The Deputy Assistant Commissioner for Control at Brigade Control will monitor the application of the policy by control officers and send a report to the Deputy Commissioner, Operations as required.

4 Charging

- 4.1 Appendix 3 details the charging policy. Under the existing rules, we are entitled to recover costs from building or lift owners for attending non-emergency call outs. We are not required to attend incidents where a person is shut in a lift but not in any immediate physical or medical danger. We should only be called in an emergency. The scheme was introduced in 2009 to tackle the growing number of incidents we attended. A charge will apply when we attend three or more non-emergency shut in lift incidents, at the same building, within 12 months.
- 4.2 The LFB will charge a fee² as above on those occasions where we release someone from a lift unless it was also an emergency (involving serious illness or injury and is recorded on the Incident Management System (IMS) as "lift release to medical case").
- 4.3 Once a premises has become chargeable all subsequent chargeable lift releases will generate an invoice to the lift owner or operator. If the number of chargeable lift releases at a chargeable premises reduces to two or less calls in the previous twelve months and the owner has set up suitable alternative release arrangements then the LFB may waive that particular charge.
- 4.4 Charging will be administered in each area by staff from within the area administrative teams. The charging administrators will use data supplied by the Head of Data and Improvement to help establish who should be charged. Corporate Services will send out the invoices and will, along with the General Counsel to the Commissioner, as appropriate, be responsible for debt recovery.

5 Action by attending operational crews

- 5.1 Crews will carry out their normal actions as required by their operational policies. At the incident they will gather information for subsequent input into the IMS. The information in IMS will be

¹ The relevant definition of 'emergency' contained in Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 is, "an event or situation that causes or is likely to cause:

- (a) one or more individuals to die, be seriously injured or become seriously ill, or
- (b) serious harm to the environment (including the life and health of plants and animals)."

A person being shut in a lift is usually an inconvenience not an emergency unless there are some additional factors that make the situation meet the definition above.

² The fee is the Brigade's special services charge – Policy number 402 – charging for special service incidents..

used as the basis for the charging process and crews must take due care that the IMS information is input correctly. Crews may be asked (through their borough commanders) to gather contact information about the premises owner.

- 5.2 Crews should be familiar with the outline of the charging policy as they may be asked questions by members of the public. The public can be directed to the London Fire Brigade website or Area Team for further information.
- 5.3 When ordered to a non-emergency mobilisation the appliance should proceed without delay but at normal road speed without blue lights or sirens. On arrival, whether an emergency mobilisation or not, the incident commander will carry out a dynamic risk assessment to determine the level of risk and the appropriate actions.
- 5.4 A non-emergency attendance can be changed to an emergency attendance by the incident commander if this can be justified based on other information received from Brigade Control or any other source. Incident commanders are reminded that their powers (for example, to force entry) are limited at non-emergency incidents.
- 5.5 All operational staff attending shut in lift incidents should be aware of Policy number 977 – All incident considerations and PN978 – Utilities and fuel and be applying it consistently. The policy states that where the power supply to a lift is shut down in order to deal with the incident, a tag form 5288 should be attached on or as near as possible to the main valve/switch of the supply shutdown using the tie provided or string from station stock.

6 Action by the Business Intelligence Team

- 6.1 The Head of Data and Improvement will ensure that on a twice monthly basis the Business Intelligence Team will gather call information from the previous twelve months and apply the charging criteria. They will make this information available to the area teams in the agreed format.
- 6.2 The Business Intelligence Team will monitor the outcomes of the policy and send a report to the Deputy Commissioner, Operations as required. This report will include:
 - The number of calls recorded as NSIL (not attended), B2E (emergency attendances) and B2NE (non-emergency attendances) including those that end up being recorded as false alarms, "no actions" or other incident type.
 - The number of lift releases made with breakdown into their types (child, medical case, etc).
 - Number of lift releases and charges for each premises; with a comparison of the number of lift releases from premises that made one, two or more releases.
 - Comparison of the above data by time period (year, quarter, month) and location (area, borough, station and watch) as appropriate.
 - Shut in lift call handling time by Brigade Control.
 - Attendance times – emergency and non-emergency lift attendance comparison.
 - Issues arising from the policy.

7 Action by area teams

- 7.1 The area DACs will ensure that suitable arrangements are in place for administering owner engagement and charging in their area. The Area Teams are responsible for confirming that a charge is due to a particular owner. Where necessary, the SW Area will coordinate activities that are not covered by individual areas; this is covered in "Central monitoring" below.
- 7.2 Area Teams will:
 - (a) Input charge details into the Purchase Invoice Management System (PIMS).

- (b) Keep borough commanders informed of contact with lift owners in their borough.
- (c) Maintain a record of all premises whose ownership has been identified and contact details of the owners.
- (d) Maintain a record of all significant contact with lift owners and copy that information to the South West Area team (Central coordination).
- (e) Maintain a record of the charges that have been identified, paid, waived and cancelled with details of the premises and owner.
- (f) Help coordinate the identification of the ownership of premises and the sending of letters (if appropriate) to the owners of premises that have had three or more calls in the previous twelve months.
- (g) Be a source of information about this policy both internally and to the public.
- (h) If a lift owner applies for a waiver, determine whether to waive the charge and send a letter to this effect to the lift owner.

7.3 Area Teams will provide progress reports to their area DAC and Deputy Commissioner, Operations as required. The report will include:

- Number of charges identified (by the Business Intelligence Team), invoiced, received, waived and cancelled by month, borough, area and owner.
- The number of lift releases and charges per lift owner.
- Details of contact with lift owners over the previous twelve months.
- Proportion of 3+ premises with an identified owner by area and borough.
- Issues arising from the policy.

7.4 Where a lift owner appeals against the judgement of the Area Team a person nominated by the area DAC will consider the case and the South West Area team (Central coordination) will be informed.

8 Corporate services directorate

8.1 The Corporate services directorate will:

- Send out invoices.
- Monitor the administration of the charging process carried out by the Area Teams.
- Deal with lift owners who have not paid their charge within the required time.
- Inform the Area Team involved and the South West Area Team of any late payment.

9 Central monitoring

9.1 The Deputy Commissioner, Operations has arranged for central monitoring to be the responsibility of the area DAC of the South West Area. The South West Area DAC will ensure that arrangements are in place to:

- Provide a central contact point for lift policy related issues.
- Provide coordination of support departments (General Counsel, Comms, etc) for the lift policy.
- Monitor the lift policy performance and outcomes.
- Maintain a log of significant events related to the lift policy.
- Arrange a regular meeting (frequency to be determined by the AC) to consider progress and best practise. To include; Area Teams, Business Intelligence Team, Brigade Control and Corporate Services.

- Provide the Deputy Commissioner, Operations with information to inform decision making.

Appendix 1 – Lift policy background

The Brigade is not under a duty to attend lift incidents but has the power, under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, to take action it considers appropriate if a situation is likely to cause one or more individuals to die or become injured or to provide services to any person or for any purpose that the Brigade thinks is appropriate. The LFB will only attend non-emergency shut in lift incidents if there is no one else available to carry out the release. It does this to prevent a situation that might cause an emergency, either from untrained people trying to make the release or to prevent a person in the lift being in danger from prolonged confinement in the lift.

As part of the London Safety Plan (LSP4) the Brigade approved the introduction of call filtering and charging in order to reduce the number of attendances at shut in lift (SIL) incidents. In 1966 the Brigade attended just 935 SIL incidents (less than 3 a day). In 2008/9 the Brigade made over 14,000 lift releases (about 40 a day). When it started to attend these calls it did so in good faith that it was providing a public service but the Brigade is now finding that some lift owners are using its services instead of having adequate maintenance and release arrangements.

A reduction in SIL incidents will lead to more time being available for emergency calls, training and community safety and any associated reduction of travelling will lead to:

- (a) A reduction in pollution (exhaust fumes, noise).
- (b) A decrease in fuel costs.
- (c) A reduction in the risk of injury and damage due to vehicle accidents.

Appendix 2 – Mobilising policy

There are three outcomes following receipt of call to person shut in lift:

(a) Emergency Mobilisation;

A person in the lift is seriously ill, likely to be seriously ill or cannot be contacted.

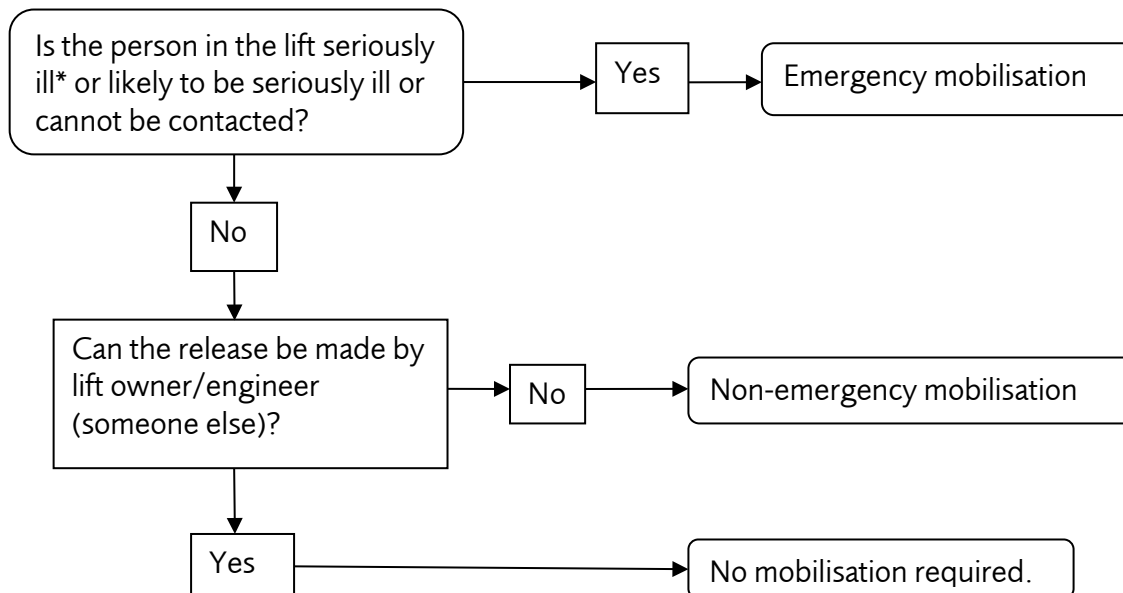
(b) Non-Emergency Mobilisation;

Release cannot be made by lift engineer or someone else responsible for the lift and none of the circumstances in (a) above apply.

(c) No Mobilisation;

Release can be made by a lift engineer or someone else responsible for the lift and none of the circumstances in (a) above apply.

These outcomes are illustrated in the flow chart below



* The meaning of "seriously ill" is open to interpretation on a case by case basis, but any condition that requires immediate medical treatment (e.g. where an ambulance would be required to attend) comes into this category.

The length of time that a person is confined in the lift is not, on its own, reason to send a LFB attendance.

Brigade Control officers will question the caller to gather information. The questions will vary according to the circumstances and there is no set script. As a general rule, they will try to avoid asking leading questions; for example, "Are you seriously ill?" The person in the lift should have the opportunity to raise the alarm about their state of health either to the caller or directly to the Control officer.

Appendix 3 – Details of charging process

Introduction

The aim of charging lift owners is to reduce the number of shut in lift calls that are attended. The LFB is not trying to use charges as a means of income generation. The LFB will be called to release people from lifts if the lift release arrangements are not available or do not exist. If suitable lift release arrangements do not exist we want to encourage the owner to put alternative arrangements in place – the charge is part of that encouragement.

The power to charge comes from the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. This enables the LFB to recover costs for releasing people from lifts. There is no power to charge if at the incident we also extinguish fire or protect life and property in the event of fire or we render emergency medical assistance or for mobilising to a shut in lift and finding another incident type the LFB has chosen to limit the instances that it charges. This has been done to limit the impact of charging on LFB administrative resources and to focus its impact on the owners of high call premises. A charge will apply when we attend three or more non-emergency shut in lift incidents, at the same building, within 12 months.

Once a premises has become chargeable all subsequent chargeable lift releases will generate an invoice to the lift owner.

The decision to limit the charge to a building rather than an individual lift, lift owner or estate is based on the ease of owner identification for the LFB. The actual lift involved is not usually recorded on IMS. The definition of an estate is not clear or consistent and is more likely to involve multiple owners. It is assumed that the owner of the building will also be the owner of the lift. When this is not the case, this will be noted for that building by the relevant area team.

IMS

Charging is based on the information recorded on IMS by the attending crew. The outcomes to a mobilisation to a SIL incident are:

Chargeable

- (a) Lift release to able bodied person not in distress – person ten or more years old.
- (b) Lift release to person in distress – a person in distress released from a lift (no ambulance called).
- (c) Lift release to child – a child under ten years old released from the lift.

Not chargeable

- (d) False alarm good intent – no action by Brigade. The IC has evidence that we were called because someone thought there was a person shut in a lift but they were not.
- (e) False alarm malicious – no action by Brigade. The IC has evidence that that we were called because someone wanted to maliciously deceive us.
- (f) Special service no action – A special service incident attended where the Brigade took no action, except a standby, e.g. mobilised to release a person shut in a lift, on arrival, the person had been released by others.
- (g) Lift release to medical case – A seriously ill person requiring an ambulance released from a lift. This is an emergency.
- (h) All other outcomes are not chargeable under this policy.

The identification of a building on IMS is primarily done by its postcode. This can cause errors when two or more buildings share a postcode but this is unlikely with the size and type of building that we regularly attend. With large multi-storey residential buildings the more common problem is that they have more than one postcode. It is particularly important to avoid errors that would increase the number of charges received by a lift owner.

Area teams will use the information provided by the Business Intelligence Team and their records of lift ownership to identify the lift owner. They will then enter the required details onto the PIMS system.

The Corporate Services Department will:

- Monitor the administration of the charging process carried out by the area teams.
- Deal with lift owners who have not paid their charge within the required time.
- Inform the Area team involved and the South West Area team of any late payment.

If invoices are cancelled due to incorrect data entered into IMS then area teams should inform the Business Intelligence Team so that the IMS entry can be amended.

In some case, we may make lift releases even though suitable alternative arrangements were in place and lift breakdown is rare. If this appears to be the case then the charge can be waived; the owner has already taken suitable steps to prevent us being called and there is no value in further encouragement. The waiver process is initiated by a lift owner applying for a waiver as detailed on our website.

Document history

Assessments

An equality, sustainability or health, safety and welfare impact assessment and/or a risk assessment was last completed on:

EIA	15/01/2024	SDIA	23/10/2023	HSWIA	16/10/2023	RA	NA
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Audit trail

Listed below is a brief audit trail, detailing amendments made to this policy/procedure.

Page/para nos.	Brief description of change	Date
Page 3	Footnote 2, removed the charge for the special service incidents and added a link to the PN402 – charging for special service incidents.	20/05/2019
Throughout	Policy reviewed as current, no changes. Broken hyperlinks removed.	15/01/2024
Throughout	Cross references to cancelled PN106 replaced with PN977 and PN978.	27/03/2024
Throughout	References to to "Head of IM" changed to "Head of Data and Improvement" and references to IM or Information Management changed to "the Business Intelligence Team".	15/10/2025

Subject list

You can find this policy under the following subjects.

Lifts	

Freedom of Information Act exemptions

This policy/procedure has been securely marked due to:

Considered by: (responsible work team)	FOIA exemption	Security marking classification