
The Key to Elevator Safety in an Emergency

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In the event of a fire, earthquake or other critical incident, it's essential that firefighters and emergency personnel be able to quickly gain control over your building's elevator. This is typically done manually by using a key switch located on the ground floor to activate fire service mode. Once set, elevators are then recalled to the ground floor and inoperable during emergency except under specific circumstances. Because of the need for emergency personnel to be able to quickly access these elevators to get to the fire location quickly and evacuate residents, key switches for all elevators in BC buildings must now be operable by the same key.

In 2010, the most current version of the CSA B44-2007 Safety Code for Elevators and Escalators was adopted into the Elevating Devices Safety Regulation (EDSR), bringing into effect a standard coded key switch for fire service. BC Safety Authority (BCSA) issued a safety order in March 2015 requiring that any elevators not already equipped with the current standard Firefighters' Key Switch have it installed no later than December 31, 2017.

"Prior to the 2007 code adoption in 2010, there was no standardized key for the province and that often resulted in delays as emergency personnel scrambled looking for the right keys," explains Earl Townsen, Senior Safety Officer, Elevating, Ropeways and Amusements for BCSA. "We now require a standard barrel key with coding which allows faster access by emergency personnel."

What's involved?

Not sure if your building has the required Firefighters' Key Switch? Check the elevator bank in the building lobby, or ask your elevator maintenance contractor. If you do need one, be aware that key switch upgrades

are not considered alterations that require a design submission. The work will be considered to be a replacement of existing components that does not change the function of the key switch.

For most newer elevators, the key switch replacement is a relatively fast repair that can be completed in less than a day by your elevator maintenance contractor. The cost to replace a single key switch is typically around \$1,000, though it will vary depending on the age of your elevator. It is the responsibility of the elevator maintenance contractor to advise BCSA once the required changes have been made.

When's the deadline?

All elevators must have the current standard Firefighters' Key Switch in place no later than December 31, 2017. It is the responsibility of the elevator contractor to advise BCSA once the required work has been completed. If the elevator is not compliant after the deadline, BCSA may consider enforcement action against owners/property managers. It is important to keep in contact with BCSA if you have any questions or concerns about this issue.

To learn more, please contact your elevator maintenance contractor or email FEOSafetyOrder@safetyauthority.ca.