"WHY DO WE HAVE ALL THESE SILLY REGULATIONS?"

David, a property owner from Manchester is frustrated that his oak door has been spoilt by a lift safety sign.

DEAR JOHN

I own an office building with a hydraulic lift. Apparently, no one can go into the room with the hydraulic tank and locked control panel unless they are trained. There are no moving parts. The lift company has put an ugly danger sticker on the lovely oak door. My consultant suggested that I could put a wire cage around the lift equipment so that the room could also be used for other purposes. Frankly, the lift equipment is less dangerous than the electric hob we have in the kitchen! Why do we have all these silly regulations?

JOHN SAYS

I am a big fan of oak doors and agree they should not be spoilt by ugly and, in my opinion, unnecessary sticky signage. Remove it, keep the door locked and keep the key with a responsible person in your office. Write into your management system that the key should only be issued to qualified personnel on production of their risk assessment for working on or around hydraulic lifts and live control systems. Problem solved.

I had a client with the same dilemma you describe. He asked me what the penalty was for not having a 'DANGER LIFT MACHINERY' sticker on a machine room door in a very nice hotel lobby. I suggested it may result in a letter from local EHO or similar if the LOLER inspector reported it as a defect. He decided to take the risk and declined the sticker. To my current knowledge, the door remains unmarked some 12 years later. The key is in the maintenance manager's office, and the maintenance company knows where it is.

Regarding a wire cage to partition off the hydraulic equipment - the valve block, and outlet pipe could be damaged or interfered with by others, so it may be prudent to add some additional protection if the room is to be used for storage, etc. But again, provided the room is only accessible to authorised persons and managed correctly, a simple cover (mesh or otherwise) over the tank, valve block, and any exposed pipework should solve the problem. This seems to be one of those instances whereby one of those 'chancer type' lift consultants may have half a point.

Concerning 'silly regulations,' I would be happy to expand this column and respond to any of our readers who encounter regulations that seem to be unnecessary or unfathomable. Any thoughts on rubber mats meant to protect engineers? I have some I could share… but maybe that's for next time!

JOHN BENTLEY

John is an established professional within the lift industry, with over 42 years of varied management and technical experience with a specific interest in quality service delivery, sympathetic lift modernisations where viable, and the development and adaptation of modern technology and design installed in existing environments.

His career started with H&C Lifts/Dover Elevators (USA) and in 1998 he established his own contracting business, trading as ANSA Elevators Ltd. – now recognised as one of the leading independent lift engineering companies in the UK. Since 2015 he has been part owner of LECS (UK) Ltd employed as a Director and Project Engineer covering all aspects of building transportation design and maintenance. He provides the company with all lift traffic analysis support along with expert witness information gathering and reporting.

John believes you never stop learning, so is currently studying Lift Engineering at the University of Northampton.