

# To Upgrade a Little .... or a Lot !

## Timely Maintenance Reduces Elevator Downtime

Minor upgrades to older elevators will keep them running efficiently and allow you to budget for major repairs or modernization.

### By Dave Balmer

It is said that old soldiers never die...they just fade away. It can also be said that old elevators never die, they just become erratic. I know that doesn't rhyme but it is a realistic description of what can happen with older elevators. They reach a point where they cannot be kept "alive and kicking" no matter what medicine (read maintenance and service) we offer them. (Just like our old soldier.) Eventually our "old soldier" will give up the ghost and go to his reward!

Our old elevator, of course, will just fail in some major component and then not be available for use by the building occupants "for a considerable period of time." That causes problems...especially for cash flow and happy tenants! Several floors of angry tenants does not a happy owner make! At this point there is no choice but to upgrade the equipment to modern standards. And now you have to do this under pressure and under a severe time constraint. "Gotta have that elevator working NOW," says the tenant's association "or else," also does not a cost effective repair make!

Could this confrontational situation have been avoided and, if so, by what means? Well, using our "old soldier" analogy again, we could have extended his life by the use of proper medicines (read maintenance and service again) and perhaps a couple of transplants (read component upgrades). Eventually we know that our old soldier will come to his final days no matter what medicines we use and so will our old elevator. However, we will have extended his (its) life for a number of years and provided a good "quality of life" for the tenants in the interim.

This analogy is to illustrate the concept of minor upgrades to older equipment to keep it operating in the most efficient and reliable manner while we budget for that major repair or "modernization" that we know is coming! Like the boy scouts say...we must be prepared!

The components which require the most attention "on a continual basis" are, logically, those components which are subject to the most wear, use or abuse! This list would include:

- Automatic door operators (top of the list you notice!)
- Car doors and their related components (rollers, tracks, sills, guides, door re-opening devices, etc)
- Landing doors and components at common use entrances (lobbies, garage levels, sub-basements)
- Controllers

To give a little credence to the "wear factor", consider a building where 500 tenants use the two elevators in their building just twice a day. If we do the math, we realize that 500 tenants times two will mean that the lobby doors on the two elevators will (each) be used a total of 182,500 times! Now let's add visitors to these tenants and pizza delivery people and sales people and newspaper boys and other delivery persons plus move-ins and move-outs (very hard on elevator equipment). *The annual use of each elevator will easily reach 350,000 cycles...and even more!*

Demand for elevator service in your building does not decrease with age...in fact it will most likely increase! Consider the elevator controllers, which receive this extraordinary demand for service each year, sending signals to open doors, start motors and activate brakes. And they are expected to operate flawlessly "each and every time", even as they are aging, slowing down and wearing out just like our "old soldier".

Age slows everything down and decision making (read elevator response time) becomes slower. Without proper care and attention for your “old soldiers” dramatic changes in operation will manifest themselves. Call backs will increase and tenants will become more and more demanding. *Your elevators are the hardest working and most visible equipment in your building and require lots of TLC (Tender Loving Care).*

Take heed of the regular reports received from your maintenance company. The men and women who maintain and service your elevators are well trained, knowledgeable and motivated...they are the experts! They provide the TLC for your “old soldiers.” They ensure that your elevators operate efficiently and most importantly, safely! If they have noted that a certain major component is reaching or has reached the end of its service life and should be replaced, it makes good business sense to *make it happen!*

Proper service and preventive maintenance by a competent company on a regular basis will keep the elevators operating in a manner suitable for their age and condition, extending their working life and ensuring “happy tenants”. Eventually, however, the accumulation of failed or worn out components, both major and minor as our “old soldier” ages will require that a major upgrade (read modernization) is due! The time to perform the modernization will vary by building and usage and tenant density thus it must be tailored to the needs of each.

Your maintenance company is your “best friend” for keeping you informed of the condition of your elevators and advising when “the time has come” for a modernization. Delaying or “putting off” the modernization beyond when all the indicators say “it is time”, will just cause tenant unrest and accelerated wear of already “aged” or “worn-out-in-service” components. Erratic operation will become more noticeable, thus confirming the advice of your maintenance company.

Like death and taxes, the “big one” is a certainty for our “old soldier”. It is just a matter of when! The moral of this story is that upgrading a little on a regular basis will permit a more cost-effective, timely and convenient modernization. (Read “upgrade a lot!”)

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