

Worthiness of Lifts

By Sefa Targit

The worth of any instrument or person operating within a system is equivalent to the loss the system will suffer when that instrument or person is taken out of that organism. This definition is a well known basic rule in the evaluation of work.

For persons who approach that value in a primitive fashion, the loss becomes apparent only when the instrument is lost to the system by which time the harm is already done. Knowledgeable persons and communities make this assessment before the departure of such individuals so as not to suffer subsequent grievances. The most important equipment of any building of a height more than one storey is the lift. Our experience has repeatedly made this fact obvious.

Let's now give you a few examples. One group of six-storey high buildings constructed in late 1960s in İstanbul at Barbaros Boulevard, one of the most valuable land sites in İstanbul, had been built without lifts. Although designed to contain lift shafts, the lifts have still not been installed in the buildings 40 years later that makes it very difficult to have their independent housing units above the first floor occupied, sold or rented.

At five-storey residential blocks erected in late 1980s along the hillsides of Ortaköy, also one of the most valuable lands of İstanbul, every thinkable effort was made -against regulations- to have their construction completed without having to install lifts, and finally, the cost of installing lifts was circumvented in triumph (!) by having their higher floors built as appended modifications to the original project. Today, living in those buildings is practically a torture, and the prices of those housing units are much less than what they would be had they been properly equipped.

Having given these two examples, I am personally acquainted with to remind you what kinds of losses are involved in failing to install lifts, it should also be noted that a large number of buildings in the city contain lifts of inadequate quality and capacity.

If there is no lift in a building, or there is, but of a size, number or features insufficient to meet the traffic of its occupants:

- Lives of disabled persons obliged to live in that building become almost intolerable;
- Moving articles and furniture in and out of the building becomes a great problem, damaging the furniture in transit;
- Work of the building janitor such as servicing the occupants and collecting trash will be a very difficult chore;
- Lives of occupants with cardiac and arterial diseases will be in constant peril;
- A simple household accident may reach life threatening magnitude due to late and difficult intervention;
- Odd as it may seem, family disputes may arise as to who will take the stairs down to the car or shop to retrieve forgotten or missing articles that may finally lead to breakup of families;
- Your piano or refrigerator would not dare break down. Otherwise, it would be very difficult to keep it free of damage on its way up and down the building;
- If the building is used for business purposes, up and down travel of the employees at the day's beginning and end will cost much effort to them and time to the employer.

- In the case of death of an occupant, bearing the deceased's body downstairs will be an ordeal.

Government agencies that propose high rise buildings as a way to find solution to mass housing do not have the right to consider these as problems of the individual denizen, but should realize that these in fact are real issues for the society as a whole. To put it more bluntly, central and local governments that permit and even encourage high rise buildings bear the responsibility for calculating the way to take action when the city dwellers encounter difficulties when there are mishaps in lift operations.

Both people who out of necessity clamor to get their family under a roof without looking into details and individuals who pay millions of dollars to buy a duplex luxury unit on the 15th floor of a residential building are not aware of the above fact. Housing units bought delightedly by people without bothering to run a risk analysis or without making an assessment suggested in the beginning of this article may cause much headache for them in the future. When lifts are not given their due importance, they are manufactured by firms inadequate in terms of know-how and equipment. Government people who observe that lifts are being manufactured by less and less qualified-nondescript persons perceive the station of lifts in a building as unworthy of their attention, and this creates a vicious cycle that help sink the lift sector into deeper mire. As we have seen earlier in many areas of the industry, at this instance, we certainly do not wish the presently manufactured products to cast a shade in our lives due to the emergence of unaccountable risks. I know that expert, experienced and licensed members of the lift industry, during these days when we rapidly relocate our people in high rise buildings, see the danger and raise their voices on this matter whenever they get a chance. We believe the attitude of the government circles to be on the wrong side, who, instead of lending an ear to those voices, are trying to reduce the size of their units associated with the lift industry. Since 1980s, to consider everything commensurate with its monetary value has become a prevalent tendency. In those terms, a sector with an annual sales figure of one billion YTL in comparison to an industry with a product turnover of 20 billion YTL would seem insignificant.

It is very interesting to note that while the municipalities consider lifts as an unimportant item on their agenda, the same municipalities fail to realize that one of the most time-consuming functions of their fire fighting divisions is to rescue people from malfunctioned lifts.

There is wisdom behind having the lifts, in comparison to other machinery, classified by a separate Machine Directory determined according to their safety specifications. Lifts do convey people, but a person in a lift does not become a part of the man-machine system. This is because the passenger in the lift does not have the means to govern and steer it. Another characteristic of the lift that differentiates it from other machinery is that it is not operated solely by trained personnel, but is open to be run by ordinary people.

In view of its technical structure and its place in the life of the contemporary man, both government agencies and its users have to set the lift in a privileged niche. To explain this fact to those people is the duty of members of the lift industry.

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