



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIES

Elevator Section
Post Office Box 44480
Olympia, Washington 98504-4480
(360) 902-6130
FAX (360) 902-6132

06/18/2008

Dear Owners of Rehmke Residential Incline Elevators :

My name is Jack Day. I am the State of Washington Elevator Chief and would like to discuss a potential unsafe condition that you may have on your Incline Elevator.

To give you some background, I have been contacted by members of the industry that provides maintenance for incline elevators. They have expressed concerns over a specific type of emergency stopping device, called a Remke hook, that was installed on some incline lifts between 1970 and 1995.

I did not want to enter into this lightly and wanted to be sure this wasn't a ploy to gain business. Discussions were held between the Elevator Department and industry representatives and many questions were asked back and forth. As a result of this review I believe there is a known safety problem that needs to be addressed. I want ensure that you are aware of the condition so that you, the owner, may take appropriate corrective action.

As I'm sure you know, the primary function of an emergency stopping device is to stop and hold a lift in the unfortunate event of either a break in the suspension cable or the occurrence of an over-speed condition. Today's design standards provide for an almost instantaneous stop that only permits a slight increase in speed before the emergency stopping device is activated. This helps ensure that the inertia of a rider does not increase to the point that the subsequent stop could cause serious injury or, in extreme cases, throw a passenger from the car.

The problem with the Rehmke device is that the car may achieve too much speed prior to the application of the safety hook. For this reason it is no longer being approved by the Department for new installations or alterations.



You may be asking how something that was approved by the Elevator Department is now considered unsafe. It was a decision based on the information that was available at the time. Since then the industry has evolved and more careful design engineering has been applied to the systems being marketed today. Moreover, the national standard has been adopted by the State of Washington and it specifies the maximum operating speed of a lift since that, in turn, has a direct correlation to the effects of over-speed or free-fall and the sudden application of the brake.

Although the Rehmke hook, as long as it is maintained, will at least stop the lift and hold it in place, I do not want to see any injuries as a result of its operation.

What can you do to address this situation?

First of all, if you do not already know whether your lift has Rehmke hooks you may call the Elevator Section of the Department of Labor and Industries and we can help you make that determination. Becky Ernstes may be reached at (360) 902-6456.

If you already know that you have a Rehmke hook please take this into consideration when determining the safety of yourself, your family, and guests while riding your lift.

You may also wish to contact one of the licensed companies that specialize in the installation, service, and repair of incline lifts and explore some alternatives for upgrading to current standards.

The department will take further steps to bring these lifts into compliance but we would prefer that you first work with the licensed companies to mitigate these issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jack Day".

Jack Day
Chief Elevator Inspector
(360) 902-6128