



LIFTS OFFER FAST IN AND OUT IN OUR HIGH-RISE CITY

Of all the transport facilities in a modern city, lifts are the most essential.

Some of us may not need to use public transport if we live near our place of work, but most of us can hardly avoid using lifts at home, in the office or for social activities.

To engineers, a lift is a tramcar that travels in a vertical direction.

It is electrically driven, has self-closing doors and is controlled through electronic signals.

It carries passengers from the lobby to and from individual floors.

Like other modes of public transport, the key to effective use is carrying capacity.

We see queues in the morning in office building lobbies, and we sometimes experience difficulties getting into lifts during lunchtime.

However, this is no different from getting on buses, trams or MTR trains during rush hours.

For cost and space efficiency, capacity should never be designed around the notion that a lift should be accepting all waiting passengers at first call during peak times.

Instead, it should revolve around the idea that some waiting should be tolerated.

There are at least two common forms of misuse of lift services.

The first is the tendency to use it to access adjacent floors.

For adjacent floors, the use of stairs will be more efficient and good for health.

Another common habit is the tendency to block the door to prevent other passengers from entering – in the belief that it will save them time.

As the longest time is for opening and closing doors, it is counter-productive to cause lifts to stop at floors without picking up or dropping off passengers.

If passengers cooperate and load up each lift, it will go from the floor where it last picked up a full load directly to the lobby, without wasting time stopping at other floors.

In this age of coronavirus, some



Nuts and bolts

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people may be concerned over close contact with strangers in confined spaces.

Once again, my advice is to wear masks and minimize contact with metal surfaces, including buttons and handrails.

As long as passengers do not sneeze or cough without having a face mask in place, the risk of infection should remain extremely small.

Lift cabins are ventilated with ceiling fans, which should allow for adequate changes of air and replenishment of fresh air, diluting whatever unwanted particles that may be in spaces.

Let me share a lift joke with you.

A lift expert came out of a meeting in an office building and saw a young lady pressing both the “up” and “down” call buttons.

His professional instinct prompted him to give some free advice to her, explaining that no one ever needs to call a lift in both directions, as this action only slows down the efficient use of lifts for others.

To this, the lady retorted: “Ha! Thank you for your advice, but you obviously do not understand the layout of this building. The ladies’ toilets are located on alternative floors but not on this floor. Whichever lift stops first will get me to where I need.”

This stunned the lift expert.

To be frank, while it might have been convenient for this lady, she was behaving selfishly and might have caused an unnecessary interruption to the lift service for others.

Like all transport facilities, a bit of patience and community spirit will always help to improve efficiency.

After all, the essence of all public transport is the ability to share resources.

I wish everyone safe and efficient travels on lifts.

Veteran engineer Edmund Leung Kwong-ho casts an expert eye over Hong Kong’s iconic infrastructure