

HOME ELEVATORS

Home elevators are becoming more common in Canadian private residences as homeowners implement them for convenience, accessibility, aging-in-place, and resale considerations. According to the Canadian Elevator Contractors Association (CECA), over 2000 residential elevators are installed annually across Canada. There is also an increase in modifying existing homes to incorporate an elevator. New construction homes are often designed to accommodate an elevator from occupancy, or by reserving space for a roughed-in hoistway (elevator shaft) for the future.

While home elevators provide benefits as an amenity or a necessity to its users, it's important for homeowners to understand and mitigate risks associated with elevators. The commercial elevator industry is heavily regulated across Canada. However, the private elevator industry is largely unregulated, leaving homeowners to bear a certain level of risk. Homeowners are to take this responsibility seriously!

It is recommended for homeowners to implement a strategic risk management plan that addresses design, installation inspection, education, usage, maintenance, and testing. This plan and assistive guide can lessen disruptions and save you costs. It also creates favourable evidence of homeowners making the effort to act reasonably and responsibly.

Elevator and hoistway

Keep elevators safe to use by ensuring the elevator is manufactured and installed according to the most recent code, and by incorporating safety design elements at your initial planning and consultation. Consider implementing the following items:

- Ensure the hoistway is designed and built to the **manufacturer's specifications**.
- Ensure a **wired landline telephone** is installed in the elevator cab. Refer to the manufacturer's instructions or contact the manufacturer regarding installations within the cab.
- Ensure the elevator system can handle the appropriate **weight capacity** for your present and future needs, and that the weight capacity is not exceeded during usage.
- Consider connecting the elevator to a **back-up power generator** with an **automatic transfer switch** to ensure the elevator remains operational in the event of a power outage.
- Speak with your elevator consultant regarding **additional safety features**, such as safety brakes, an emergency stop switch connected to the alarm, a battery-operated lowering device (in the event of a power outage), and a manual crank lowering device, which is a secondary lowering device (in the event of battery failure).

Machine space

Design the machine space in an exclusive area of your home for the elevator mechanical equipment. Do not integrate the machine space with existing spaces or use it for general household storage. Design and maintain the machine space with the following considerations:

- The machine room door is self-closing.
- The machine room door has a lock requiring a key for access and is a unique set that is not used for other doors in the house.
- Only store elevator parts in the machine room. Do not store general household storage.
- Speak with your contractor and consider storing spare, back-up parts to minimize outages and downtime.
- Install centrally monitored smoke and heat detectors in the machine room.
- Mount an ABC-type fire extinguisher inside the machine room.
- Designate a space for your logbook and pens.
- Ensure solvents are not stored in the mechanical room.

Usage and education

Educating users about home elevators is a critical step in risk planning. Below are examples of safety points to teach users – especially children:

- **Mind the gap** when using the elevator. Some elevator models may have a gap between hall doors and elevator car doors that can allow a small child to stand between the doors when the elevator is operational. Speak to your contractor about reducing or negating this gap.
- **Wait patiently** and confirm that the elevator is stopped and level before entering. This prevents users from falling down the hoistway in the event of a malfunction. In this dangerous scenario, the outer set of doors open and/or the locks fail while the cab is located on another floor level.
- **Make users aware of weight limitations** for persons and items. Heavy or bulky items, such as furniture and packed luggage, should always be sent alone.
- **Emphasize the importance of appropriate behaviour** during elevator usage. Prohibit jumping and roughhousing in the elevator.
- **Do not use the elevator in the event of a fire.** Consider at-risk, vulnerable individuals requiring assistance during an emergency due to disabilities, impairments, injuries, pregnancy, being elderly or a young child, or not understanding verbal/written instructions. Ensure these individuals develop and practice their personal emergency egress plan, also known as an individual evacuation plan. These plans are to be reviewed regularly.
- **Require homeowners and users to complete the Homeowner's Training** administered by CECA Private Residence Division (PRD) at least once per year. The course is offered online, free-of-charge, and provides guidance on proper use and maintenance of private residence elevators. A certificate of completion is provided. The course can be accessed on www.cecaprregistry.com, or you can contact your Risk Services Consultant or insurance broker for the link to the training course. Retain copies of all training certificates acquired by household members and visitors. In the future, these training certificates may be requested or required for insurance purposes.

Visit CECA Private Residence Division for more resources at www.cecaprregistry.com.

For more information on making your property safer, contact our Risk Services team at **1.833.692.4111** or visit us at www.northbridgeinsurance.ca.

Maintenance and inspection considerations

Since regulations and standards for home elevators in Canada were lacking, CECA addressed these gaps by forming the Private Residence Division (PRD) in 2016. The CECA PRD created a self-regulated standard that homeowners, contractors, and municipalities can follow and enforce without significantly increasing costs. Ensure your elevator contractor complies with CECA's standards for private residence elevators, and performs regular maintenance, inspection, and testing.

Homeowners can take the following steps:

- Review the homeowner's manual provided by the manufacturer for your specific elevator, which includes cautions, notices, and safety warnings.
- Look for the CECA ID label near or attached to the elevator controller. If the CECA ID label is not present, have the elevator inspected to ensure it is compliant with applicable codes. Register the device with CECA PRD.
- Homeowners can use the CECA PRD database to determine if their newly purchased home was previously registered as having an existing elevating device.
- For new devices, register the device as a new elevator installation with CECA PRD and keep a record of this registration.
- Hire a qualified elevator contractor to perform repairs or alterations to ensure compliance and safety. We recommend contractors registered through CECA PRD for maintenance, testing, and repairs. A list of contractors can be found on the CECA PRD website at www.cecaprregistry.com.
- Do not rely on periodic repairs or "one-off" service requests. Instead, enter into a written maintenance agreement which clearly stipulates the frequency of maintenance, inspection, and testing of your elevator.
- Store your logbook in the machine space and ensure your contractor updates the logbook every time they perform maintenance, repair, and testing. Take photos of the pages and save them to a back-up folder so there is a digital record of the visit dates and actions taken.
- In the event of a recall or safety alert, immediately follow the directions of the safety alert.
- Do not use your elevator when it has a known operational issue or deficiency.
- During entrapment situations, follow the training you acquired through CECA PRD Homeowner's Training, your service provider, and the manufacturer. Call 911 if there is an emergency.