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SAFETY MUST COME FIRST

The Polish Association of Lift Manufacturers (Polskie Stowarzyszenie Producentów Dźwigów) was established in 2003. The Association (PSDP) is a national civic organisation affiliating persons and companies dealing on the investment market covering materials handling equipment in Poland. The PSPD is a business-line organisation now associating representatives of major manufacturers of passenger and goods-carrying lifts, escalators and moving sidewalks involved in their production, assembly and maintenance.

In pursuit of its statutory objectives, the Association undertakes activities aimed at:

- all round development and rational application of lift equipment, escalators and moving sidewalks, hereinafter referred to as "lifts",
- improving safety and protecting the environment,
- developing collaboration with government departments and other organisations on matters of legal regulations and standards applying to lifts,
- attaining top quality in production and services, among others by tabling motions to the appropriate state administration bodies for instituting requisite quality standards in Poland to improve production and services quality for the good of the users, and in particular to ensure their safety,
- developing active co-operation on matters of establishing and application of standards in the elevator and lift industry, including the Association's participation in international and regional collaboration on matters of standards.

The PSPD is also an organisation working for legal solutions covering the whole construction sector and - in view of its specific interests - especially the materials handling equipment sector.

Hence, great importance is attached by the PSPD to developing its co-operation with builders and managers of construction objects, notably multi-family homes as well as multiple occupancy and public utility buildings.

Home builders, e.g. private investors and developers, are looking for new and safe lift equipment solutions which also fulfil essential requirements with respect to access for the disabled, permissible noise level, durability and low energy consumption.

Managers of buildings, responsible as they are, among others, for the technical condition of lifts, have to bear the costs of their day-to-day operation, maintenance, periodical surveys and repairs.

The PSPD has established regular collaboration with the Technical Inspection Office. However, in view of the complexity of issues concerned with lifts, the Association has been in contact also with other central state administration organs, and that is

- the Ministry of Interior and Administration - on matters of fire protection (as the National Fire Service is part of the Ministry's structure),
- the Ministry of Economy and Labour - on matters of work safety and hygiene during the assembly and maintenance of materials handling equipment,
- the Ministry of Infrastructure - on matters of amending the "Technical conditions which buildings and their location should comply with", with respect to materials handling equipment.

With Poland's entry into the European Union, many legal acts effecting the lift sector as well, have been passed to amend earlier legislation. These include:

- the Construction Law - the Act of 16 April 2004 (Dz.U. - Journal of Laws - No 93, item 888) - on amendments to the Construction Act,
- "Technical conditions, which buildings and their location should comply with" - the Ordinance of the Minister of Infrastructure of 7 April 2004 (Dz.U. - Journal of Laws - No 109, item 1156), an amendment of the earlier ordinance,
- the Law on Construction Materials of 16 April 2004 (Dz.U. - Journal of Laws - No 92, item 881).

These amendments have had an impact on the construction, assembly and use of new lifts, and in that respect they are binding on real estate managers and investors as well.

Still outstanding, however, is the problem of ensuring a proper maintenance level of existing lifts and of improving their safety in compliance with the European Commission's Recommendations 95/216/EC of 08. 06. 1995 and the EN 81.80 Safety Norm for Existing Lifts (SNEL).

Any undertakings in this respect stand in need of substantial financial resources. Housing communities and co-operatives cannot afford these right now. The economic factor is frequently also determining the choice of lift maintenance firms. It is estimated that about 20% of all lifts in Poland are attended to, unfortunately, by maintenance workers, who are not properly trained and lack adequate technical back-up facilities to do the repair work properly. It is, therefore, important, in our view, that lifts be taken care of by companies offering stand-by lift repair services around the clock, equipped with appropriate technical back-up facilities, employing a highly qualified staff of maintenance and assembly workers as well as licensed by the Technical Inspection Office.

Hence, we have come forward with the initiative to institute legal mechanisms that would allow the granting of Maintenance Work Certificates to legal persons, notably lift-work companies.

The granting of such a certificate would also improve safety and streamline maintenance work.

A Certificate could be granted to companies which:

- provide successive training in the technique of maintaining specific materials handling equipment,
- run consignment warehouses,
- operate set-in, rapid-response emergency maintenance services,
- ensure smooth elimination of major breakdowns and damages,
- exercise professional control (supervision) of maintenance services,
- have acquired documented quality assurance systems,
- are equipped with full diagnostic systems,
- run a report register of breakdowns, damages and maintenance work under way,
- rectify maintenance procedures drawing on analysis of past developments,
- possess proper know-how and up-to-date producer's instructions as well as other materials indispensable for carrying out maintenance work.

The Association's priority right now has been to create a legal basis for introducing the Safety Norm for Existing Lifts (SNEL) in Poland. To this end, the Association has joined hands with the Technical Inspection Office, the Warsaw University of Technology and the University of Mining and Metallurgy in Cracow in arranging National Consultative Forums dealing with EU legislation on lift equipment.

The formula of the Forum is open to all those concerned with the issue of lifts. Meetings are held twice a year and are attended - apart from lift manufacturers, designers, installing and maintenance companies - by representatives of government departments (Ministry of Economy and Labour, Ministry of Infrastructure, the Office for Competition and Consumer Protection, the Polish Committee for Standardisation, the National Fire Service), organisations affiliating real estate owners and managers as well as of housing co-operatives.

Preparatory steps aimed at instituting legal standards facilitating the general introduction of SNEL provisions by Ordinance to be issued by the appropriate government minister are co-ordinated by a working group of the National Consultative Forum dealing with EU legislation on lift equipment.

These preparatory steps entail:

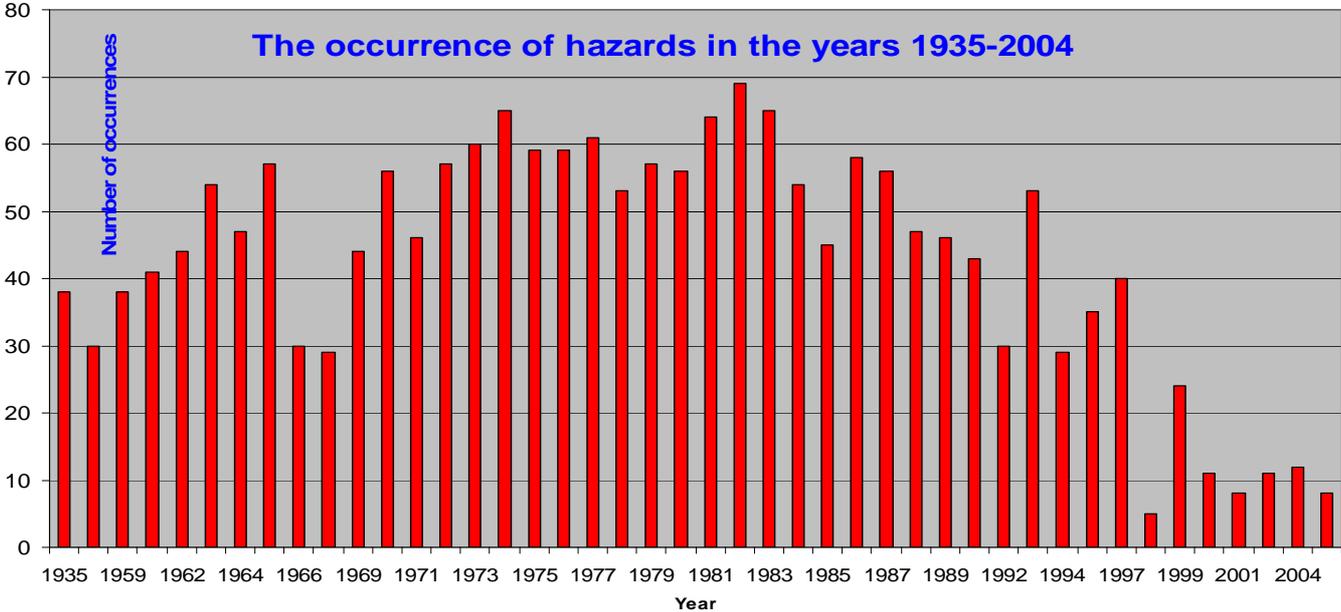
- the drafting and endorsement of the Polish text of the SNEL EN 80-81 standard - the text is ready for conducting a survey on its provisions,
- the translation into Polish of legal acts issued in EU countries - translations of Belgian and French acts have been already made available. The Spanish act is obtainable in English.
- the carrying out of a "filtration" process based on domestic statistics,
- securing the National Consultative Forum's views and recommendations for the draft of the legal act.

During the 2nd National Consultative Forum (held on 27 April 2005), several papers were delivered on the subject of circumstances conditioning the introduction of SNEL in Poland and other EU countries.

The results of the preliminary "filtration" process presented by the authors (1) indicated that out of the more than 70.000 lifts operating in Poland right now, 60 % had been put in place more than 20 years ago under the terms of safety standards binding at the time.

After examining 262 lifts throughout Poland, the authors presented a graph analysis of safety hazards (the figure of 74 represents the maximum number of hazards defined by SNEL for one lift) relative to the year in which the respective lift was installed.

Number of hazards for lifts depending on the year of installation



It follows that lifts put in place between 1970 and 1987, registered the highest number of hazards. These are very interesting findings but obviously, the "filtration process" should cover a much larger number of lifts.

The Association has been involved in efforts to procure more statistical data on the issue. These included the drawing up of a Questionnaire on safety of lifts to examine the situation with respect to possible hazards and the compliance or not with the SNEL list of standards. This questionnaire is being now distributed among lift operators and owners. We hope to present the results of the survey during the 3d National Forum in November later this year.

An analysis was also made of accidents and dangerous injuries in the years 1990-2003. Using data collected by the Central Laboratory of the Technical Inspection Office, the author's (2) reviewed the causes of 199 accidents in which 218 people were injured. **40 of these were fatal accidents.**

In line with the SNEL terminology, the accidents were caused by:

- a door and locking system unit unfit for ensuring full safety
(5.7.6; 5.7.7. and 5.7.8.1.) - two persons lost their life and 64 were injured,
- inappropriate dimensions and thickness of glass in landing door eyeholes
(5.7.3; 5.3) - three children died and 42 people were injured,
- too short aprons before the car stills
(5.8.2.) - one person died and five were injured,
- inadequate load control in car
(5.14.5) - one child died, and four persons were injured,
- defective shock absorber of landing doors
(5.7.6) - eight persons died and four were injured.

According to the authors of the papers referred to, the results of the analysis of accidents in Poland are almost identical with those obtained in analyses carried out several years ago in other EU countries. The only basic difference is that topping the statistical list of accidents in EU countries are body injuries caused by stumbling and falling due to inaccurate stoppage of the car at the landing floor.

In Poland, such accidents are hardly registered since people, generally speaking, are not yet used to claim for damages and usually blame themselves for lack of due attention.

Nevertheless, the forwarding of claims for damages - among others - against real estate owners and managers - is becoming ever more common in Poland as well, and hence the earliest possible introduction of SNEL should also be a matter of great importance for this group.

The Association has also been actively involved in endeavours to restore educational facilities to train people for work as technicians in the elevator and lift sector. During the political and economic transformation in the 1990s, secondary and vocational schools run by companies to train young people for the job of lift technicians and maintenance workers were closed down. The problem has also effected older employees aspiring to raise their qualifications and obtain a diploma of completing studies at technical vocational schools and an A-level certificate. In fact, the profession of "lift technician" disappeared even from the official list of professions compiled by the Ministry of Education and Sports. The lack of a "fresh blood" influx onto the market has already become acute and judging by the experience of other EU countries that shortage will deepen after legal regulations envisaged under the terms of SNEL are introduced.

Summing-up:

1. Apart from up-grading the level of technical solutions to improve the safety of lifts currently in operation, legislative actions involving the implementation of the EU law in Poland have also imposed a number of new obligations on managers and administrators of buildings.

2. Considering the ever-growing technological gap between new and old lifts, the number of accidents is likely to grow, and so will be the number of claims for damages laid by injured persons, if appropriate modernisation of lifts is not carried out.
3. A process of identifying hazards covering the largest possible number of lifts has been carried out promptly for the purpose of ensuring compatibility with SNEL and for fixing optimum timetables of eliminating threats.
4. The modernisation of lifts for compliance with SNEL will up-grade the lifts for the next 15 years.
5. Prompt introduction of SNEL is in the interest of owners and users of lifts.
6. A scheme has to be instituted of co-financing the modernisation of lifts by the state and local governments.

Bibliography:

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3. A survey of legal regulations concerning the introduction of SNEL, citing developments in Belgium and France - Tadeusz Popielas.
4. The impact of European legislation on the Polish elevator and lift industry - Luc Rivet.
5. The draft of the PrPN-EN 81 - 80:2005 standard on "Safety rules for the construction and installation of lifts – Existing lifts - Part 80: Rules for the improvement of safety of existing passenger and goods passenger lifts".
6. Safety must come first - Tadeusz Popielas - Administrator 9/2004.
7. SNEL, the means to improve the safety of lifts operating in Poland - Tadeusz Popielas - Administrator 7/8 -2005.

*Points 1-4: Papers delivered at the National Consultative Forum dealing with EU Legislation on lift equipment.
Warsaw, 27 April 2005