

Elevator Entrapment Response

The purpose of this Standard Operating Procedure is to establish a clear, safe, and code-aligned process for Commonwealth University personnel when responding to elevator entrapments on campus. This procedure outlines the roles and responsibilities of University Police and Maintenance, and describes the anticipated role of the Fire Department once on scene. It does not direct Fire Department actions upon arrival. The Fire Department assumes command and operates in accordance with its own policies, training, and authority.

This SOP applies to all University-owned or campus-operated elevators and to all personnel involved in responding to elevator entrapments.

Definitions

Elevator Entrapment

A condition in which one or more occupants are confined within an elevator car that has stopped and cannot be exited through normal passenger door operation.

Phase I Emergency Recall (Phase I Recall)

An emergency operation that returns an elevator car to a designated landing and removes it from normal service, typically initiated by fire alarm activation or a key switch. Phase I Recall is intended to reposition the elevator for passenger release and is not a rescue operation.

Phase II Emergency In-Car Operation (Phase II)

A fire department-controlled elevator operating mode that allows manual control of elevator movement.

Guiding Principles

Life safety is the highest priority in all elevator entrapment responses. Maintenance personnel are not emergency rescue responders, and Phase I Emergency Recall is not considered a rescue operation. Maintenance personnel shall not access the hoistway, move an elevator car with occupants inside, or perform any actions beyond Phase I recall. Any condition that extends beyond a straightforward Phase I passenger release requires Fire Department response.

University Police Dispatch and Response

University Police shall respond to the reported location and establish communication with the occupants inside the elevator. Officers will assess the situation for any signs of medical distress, smoke, fire, water intrusion, or structural concerns. University Police will maintain communication with occupants, supervise any authorized passenger release, and remain on scene until all occupants have safely exited the elevator or until the Fire Department assumes command.

If any medical emergency or distress is present, if fire alarm complications extend beyond a simple recall, if smoke, fire, flooding, or structural hazards are identified, or if the elevator car is not level at a landing, University Police shall immediately contact the local Fire Department.

In the event of a power outage, University Police shall immediately contact the local Fire Department if an elevator entrapment has occurred.

Maintenance Responsibilities

Maintenance personnel may identify the elevator type, recycle power, and attempt Phase I Fire Department Recall. With the car electrically locked out, maintenance personnel may manually open the elevator doors using normal door release methods provided by the elevator manufacturer to verify the car's position. If the elevator car is within one foot of a landing, maintenance personnel may assist occupants in exiting the car.

Maintenance personnel shall not enter the hoistway, pit, or car top; access machine rooms for manually move the elevator car; perform Phase II operations; or bypass or defeat any safety devices rescue purposes. If these actions do not result in a safe exit, Maintenance personnel shall immediately stop all efforts and notify University Police to contact the Fire Department.

If there is any uncertainty regarding elevator position, system condition, or occupant safety, Maintenance personnel shall take no further action and shall notify University Police to contact the Fire Department.

Elevator-Type Conditions Requiring Fire Department Response

For hydraulic elevators, Fire Department response is required if the car fails to recall, stops between floors, is above or below landing level, or if hydraulic leaks, overheating, or abnormal noises are present.

For traction elevators, Fire Department response is required if recall fails, the car is between floors, power loss prevents recall, or if brake, counterweight, or traction system issues are suspected.

Occupant Communication

University Police shall provide reassurance and status updates to occupants and remain in communication with occupants until safely exited. Occupants shall be instructed to remain calm, stay clear of elevator doors, and not attempt self-rescue.

Occupants shall also be instructed not to force doors, climb out of the elevator, or attempt to exit unless directed by University Police, Maintenance, or the Fire Department.