

Safe use of escalators

Technical Bulletin

Allianz Engineering Inspection Services Ltd



There is no mention of escalators or passenger conveyors in any of the 'traditional' regulations which have governed plant and equipment in use in either commercial or industrial sectors. This would normally result in such items being considered as 'non-statutory'.

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 do specifically mention escalators and moving walkways (passenger conveyors) with regard to safety in use. Supporting guidance to the regulations does in turn refer the duty holder to other guidance which advises on the need for suitable maintenance and thorough examination.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have two published guidance documents:

- Guidance Note PM34: Safety in the use of escalators
- Guidance Note PM45: Escalators: periodic thorough examination

Both these publications provide detailed guidance on the way in which a client should safely use escalators and how to have such equipment suitably maintained and thoroughly examined. These documents are further supplemented by other guidance documents in the form of British Standards (BS 5656:1997 Safety rules for the construction and installation of escalators and passenger conveyors) and industry best practice guides.

Primarily escalators and passenger conveyors are used to transport the general public in locations as diverse as airports, offices, shopping malls, railway premises, etc. This will involve the movement of people such as the very young and the infirm. A moving walkway can then

be a very disconcerting piece of equipment to use and one of the very few items of equipment where the general public actively and consciously interact with moving machinery. The potential for entanglement and resultant injury can be significant if the equipment has not been maintained and thoroughly examined in order to ensure that gaps within the equipment are maintained within safe limits and operational parameters are suitably adhered to. Analysis of available statistics has shown that 12% of examined classes have revealed defects which are a danger to persons. These defects when noted and dealt with accordingly will render the equipment safe for continued use. The issue which may have to be addressed by duty holders is in relation to those escalators and passenger conveyors which are not being examined and maintained on a regular basis.

Equipment such as escalators and passenger conveyors should not be deemed as being inherently unsafe as the statistics indicate that the frequency of occurrence against passenger traffic levels is low, where the items are maintained and thoroughly examined. However, Allianz Engineering's data also indicates that where accidents do occur then it is usually to people falling within the social groups noted above and the injuries sustained can in a number of cases be very serious indeed.

Allianz Engineering has many years of experience in the thorough examination of escalators and passenger conveyors. The service provided assists clients and duty holders in complying with their overall legal duties as well as their duty of care to their customers and service users.

For further information on this subject, please contact Engineering Standards on 01428 726118.