



Occupational Health & Safety Authority

Media Release

Short-sightedness in ‘Dangerous’ Lifts Approach

12.05.05

The quote ‘professionalism is an attitude, not a status’ could not be better-fitting to the approach that the Malta Lift Association (MLA) is taking with regards to lift safety. Indeed, the Occupational Health and Safety Authority (OHSA) is appalled by the unprofessional and uncooperative way in which sweeping statements are being issued by the MLA without prior verification.

It is a positive step that the MLA finally has answered the pleas of the OHSA to inform us about any dangerous lifts it is made aware of. Needless to say, had the interest been genuine, a phone call to the OHSA would have sufficed. This approach was rather conniving and one cannot but call into question the real motives behind the media release issued.

Had the MLA bothered to enquire with the OHSA before rushing to print, it would have been informed that the OHSA had in fact at the beginning of April of this year carried out inspections on 5 of the six lifts mentioned. The sixth one was not inspected since the company had not started its operations at the time. Following an inspection yesterday, this lift was stopped until it is certified by a competent person.

Of the five remaining lifts mentioned by the MLA, one had been the subject of an order issued by OHS officers and stopped since the owner, although he had commissioned a competent person to certify the lift, had not carried out the recommendations stipulated in the certificate.

Two of the lifts belong to one entity and the OHSA is awaiting the certificate of the competent person to be sent to the owner by tomorrow and to be immediately afterwards forwarded to OHSA. Indeed these lifts are being hoisted down so that maintenance work is carried out on them.

One of the lifts is indeed on the outside of the premises however in a secluded part away from the main traffic route. No one was present yesterday at the premises where the last lift in question is installed. Nevertheless, in both cases, inspections were already carried out last month by OHS officers and the OHSA is indeed in possession of the relevant certification by a competent person outlining the adequate recommendations.

“The OHSA takes its work very seriously and indeed investigates on both a pro-active way as well as a result of a complaint, as was the case with the re-investigation of the lifts highlighted by the Malta Lift Association in the media yesterday. It is general practice that when the lift is not deemed very dangerous, a short period of time is given to owners or employers to abide with the recommendations stipulated by the competent person in his/her certificate. In the case of imminent danger, or where OHSA instructions are not abided by, the said lift is stopped with immediate effect,” Dr Mark Gauci, Chief Executive Officer of the Occupational Health and Safety Authority said.

“The MLA might wish to note that last year nearly 200 inspections were carried out specifically on hoists and lifts, while 74 inspections have already taken place during the course of the first four months of this year. Moreover, nearly 2000 lift certificates were processed by OHSA in 2004 and more than 800 in the first 4 months of this year. In the light of the very limited resources that the OHSA has – indeed only 2 OHS officers and 1 engineer – to cater for all machinery, equipment and plant installations in Malta and Gozo, one must agree that it is substantial and a far cry from the slanderous claims made by the MLA regarding the OHSA’s level of monitoring and enforcement,” Dr Gauci continued.

“We have made various appeals to the Malta Lift Association to work hand in hand with the OHSA rather than attempting to hinder its operations. Other entities are joining forces since it is natural that a concerted effort is more effective and reaps more benefits. Indeed, joint public consultations on the new draft lifts regulations will be held jointly by the Malta Standards Authority, the Malta Resources Authority and the Occupational Health and Safety Authority in the next few weeks. The MLA might wish to follow in these footsteps and act in a responsible manner. On its part, the OHSA will not take any action at this time on the defamatory claims made by the MLA,” Dr Gauci said.

“Our driving force is not the furtherance of anybody’s commercial interests and the OHSA will continue to work closely and cooperate with all *bona fide* stakeholders, including any who might not be members of the MLA. At this point, the OHSA considers the matter closed and will not be answering to any further correspondence on the matter,” Dr Gauci concluded.