



GOING UP IN THE WORLD

Established in 1988 Amalgamated Lifts maintains, modernises and installs lift systems throughout London and the South-East.

Having two Directors, Peter Edler and Graham Clark, who were the founding principals when the company was formed in 1988, and the third Director, Simon Smith, joining in 1995 suggests longevity and stability about a company. That extends to the staff of Amalgamated Lifts, several of whom live locally and have worked there for many years. Over 30% of all employees have been with the company for ten years. As a result, the company has been able to grow continuously and steadily and has extended its services across the lift market to become a major independent company recognised as a force within the lift industry.

"We started doing modernisations of existing lifts and a service base grew out of that," remarks PR and Marketing Co-ordinator Terri Webb. "From there, we've grown the overall business, which has



retained its core values of communication, quality and service".

LIFE CYCLE

Amalgamated Lifts covers the full life cycle of a lift. It offers installation, warranty work, on-going maintenance, modernisation and repair works for locations across London and the South East. A benefit of working with a company such as Amalgamated Lifts is that it installs equipment that's straightforward to maintain. The downside of this is familiarity for its competitors and so the company has to provide a high quality of service to retain the maintenance business.

Modernisation activity doesn't always involve changing the lift car but focuses on the control panels in the motor rooms and electrical works in the shaft. These do eventually fail through old age and use, and will require modern equipment that meet today's

standards, such as disabled access requirements. Modern equipment is also proven more reliable, longer lasting and more energy efficient. The latter is achieved through variable voltage and frequency, different types of inverter systems and drive systems.

The biggest modernisation job so far has been a £2 million project for the Phoenix Housing Community, with thirty lifts updated in the course of a year and four of the lifts modernised with drum drive technology. This contract involved properties with mixed residencies and tenancies, and was completed on time despite a challenging schedule.

OLD EQUIPMENT

Maintenance work is undertaken for almost all types of lifts from various manufacturers, typically for locations such as residential properties, offices,

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businesses and multi-tenanted buildings. Among the Amalgamated Lifts portfolio is the National Gallery, the Victoria and Albert Museum, Royal Entomological Society and some really old lifts at the Travellers Club, including one in its Pall Mall property installed over one hundred years ago. Modernisation of these types of lift can't change the lift cars because they have to fit in with the character of the building.

Regular maintenance is necessary for insurance purposes in property used by the public. Terri says: "Lifts are serviced at set intervals, anything up to twelve times a year. There might be monthly visits where we're oiling and greasing, replacing consumables such as oil, light bulbs and various small contacts right through to parts of the control panel, depending on the type of contract."

Reactive maintenance is handled through a help line that's available 24/7, with calls through the day going to Amalgamated Lifts and out of hours phone calls dealt by a third party specialist service. Either way, all the work is undertaken by directly

employed staff to provide a consistency of service. Installation and modernisation clients tend to be mainly commercial offices or residential property developers. There is an increasing element of corporate work and a recent project at Canary Wharf involved the installation of a destination control system. "Whilst it was only five lifts, it was ambitious in the equipment we were fitting," recounts Terri. "In destination control, passengers select their destination via an LCD touch screen located outside the lift on the landings. The control system then assigns a lift best placed to meet the request and signals the chosen lift to the passenger. Traditional lift buttons usually seen inside the lift do not exist."

CHANGING LEGISLATION

Although Amalgamated Lifts isn't tied to a particular supplier and procures the most suitable equipment to meet clients' specifications, it does have a close working relationship with suppliers and regulatory bodies in order to keep abreast of the changes in technology and legislation. Much of the



latter stems from EU directives, where anything new has to comply with the current standards. The suppliers keep the company informed of what's changing and what has to be done to stay compliant, which benefits all parties.

It's also essential to keep staff up-to-date, which is handled on the health and safety side through an external health and safety consultant and a health and safety committee that meets once a quarter for training in first aid, asbestos awareness and other topics. "We also provide training on new equipment to make sure everyone is familiar with it," adds Terri. "We have a number of individuals who have been through the NVQ process and are now fully trained engineers. 100% of our engineers have at least NVQ3 for service and maintenance while some have gone on to NVQ4 for testing and the more technical side of things. It's great to see them working their way up."

It is necessary to remain in touch and conform. The company already has ISO 9001 for quality management and is working toward ISO 18001 for health and safety with LEIA. BIFM membership is taken seriously, with Amalgamated Lifts having pre-

viously exhibited at a BIFM sponsored event and Managing Director Simon Smith having presented a paper on energy savings at the company's Bracken House project. This included the fitting of modern drives that ran much cooler than their predecessors and enabled the removal of previously needed air conditioning units, resulting in additional energy savings.

COMPANY STRENGTHS

Amalgamated Lifts was recently named Best Medium Sized Business in the Bromley Business Awards and was a finalist in the South London Business Awards. This reflects the company's strengths and Terri adds: "We've had consistent growth year on year, our staffing levels have always gone up, everybody that works here pretty much lives within a 25 mile radius of the offices and we try to be a local supplier. We've just moved offices, which is a sign of good growth and investment in the company and we don't expect that growth to change direction."

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