

Accessibility Considerations: Vertical Platform Lifts and Limited Use, Limited Application Elevators

Vertical Platform Lifts

Vertical Platform Lifts (usually referred to as Handicapped Lifts or HLs) are regulated by the CAN/CSA-B355 Lift Code. These lifts differ from elevators in four important ways:

- They do not have doors that move with the unit, but use manual or powered swing doors at each level;
- They require constant pressure buttons;
- They have limitations on speed, size, and capacity; and,
- They require limited access (e.g. key, card, or keypad).

In many cases, the decision to install an HL is based on cost rather than on features, because HLs are one of the least expensive vertical transportation options to provide full accessibility in a building. Unfortunately, some of the limitations often become obstacles to regular use.

Limited Use, Limited Application Elevators

Limited Use, Limited Application (LULA) elevators are regulated by the CAN/CSA-B44 Elevator Code. LULAs are full elevators, with automatic operation of doors and buttons and no requirement for limited access. However, there are still restrictions on speed, size, and capacity, which makes their performance more similar to HLs rather than to elevators. In terms of cost, LULAs fall between HLs and full elevators.

The Challenge

An HL requires a smaller hoistway, a shallower pit, and a lower overhead than elevators, which provides advantages at the time of construction. However, these smaller dimensions become disadvantages if there is ever a desire to upgrade to a LULA or to a full elevator.

Unfortunately, this is often the case once the operational limitations of the swing door, constant pressure buttons, and speed/capacity features of HLs are realized in practice.

Although the LULA is a close fit to the hoistway dimensions of an HL, it is currently not possible to simply replace an HL with a LULA at this point in time.

Delta's Position

Delta believes that accessibility considerations are important aspects of building design, and that these considerations should take the long term into account. One option Delta recommends considering is making an HL hoistway slightly larger during the design and construction phases. This provides for the option of a future upgrade to a LULA or to a full elevator at a much lower cost than the alternative of replacing or expanding the shaft.

Call Delta if you have questions regarding your accessibility needs – we would be pleased to work with you to ensure your design includes the best long-term solution!