

# Towards Safer Elevatoring

by TAK Mathews

My son, Mickey, is nine years old and would prefer the sports field to the classroom. In an average week, he uses elevators and escalators (E&E) installed/maintained by six different companies. After having spent close to two decades in the E&E industry and having investigated incidents involving the safest mode of transport, I know his safety is dependent on the numerous invisible hands involved in ensuring the equipment remains safe. Even the slightest negligence by these invisible hands could have serious consequences. I place my trust on these invisible hands backed by their responsible organizations confident that they will fulfill their responsibility.

I also recognize that his safety is dependent upon how safely he uses the equipment. And as a responsible parent, I have taken measures to teach him how to use elevators and escalators safely. I have an advantage over others in that I am involved with the E&E industry and have the knowledge and experience to provide him with the right inputs.

The question that arises then is: "What about all those other parents who are not fortunate enough to be working in the E&E industry?" While it would be easy to blame the E&E industry for not doing enough, guilt has followed me for some years that as a responsible and senior member of the E&E industry, I have not done enough.

◆ "It was a freak lift accident in 2001 that resulted in a 10-year-old boy losing his right arm." – *Times of India* (June 27, 2006)

◆ "Two-year-old crushed to death in lift." – *Mumbai Mirror* (August 13, 2006)

After reading these two news reports, it was impossible to sit back doing nothing. Armed with material made available to us by the Elevator Escalator Safety Foundation (EESF) ([www.eesf.org](http://www.eesf.org)) in the U.S., my colleagues and I approached some schools to conduct the training program. The response was so disappointing that we were forced to give up the initiative. However, the guilt pangs did not go away.

The growth of the Indian E&E market over the last five years has been exponential. From 125 escalators installed until 1998, about 2,500 escalators are now being sold annually. Inquiries with users in metropolitan cities point to a low level of awareness on safe usage practices despite elevators and escalators being part of their daily



routine. With the vertical growth through the country spreading to Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, more people are being exposed to this safest form of transportation with even lower awareness levels.

In the beginning of 2008, we were appointed as consultants for a couple of mall projects in Tier 3 cities of India. While the scope of work, as such, was not a problem, the worrisome thought was that escalators in particular would be introduced for the first time in these cities where the majority of the population would never have had the need to use them in the past. All the safety features that could be built into the specifications would not be adequate to guarantee the users' safety.

David Cooper's graphic presentation on escalator accidents at the 2008 National Association of Vertical Transportation Professionals Forum and continuing news articles on accidents ensured that the gnawing guilt would not die away. Any of the incidents cited here could have involved my son or people close to me.

◆ "A six-year-old boy playing around a shopping mall's escalator slipped through the gap where the handrail ends, falling four floors to his death here this afternoon." – *The Telegraph* (July 2, 2007)

◆ "An eight-year-old boy died after he lost his footing and fell two floors from an escalator at a Varanasi mall on Sunday." – *Times of India* (May 12, 2008)

◆ "A three-year-old NRI girl was seriously injured after her hand got trapped in a moving escalator at the Indira Gandhi International airport early on Thursday." – *DNA* (November 22, 2008)

Through this period of indecision, both Barbara S. Allen (EESF) and Ricia Hendrick (Elevator World, Inc.) continued with their support and encouragement. Allen was

*Continued*

# Preliminary Reactions to EEST

## **Alok Mahajan**

### **Hitachi Lift India Pvt. Ltd.**

*This is the first "out box" initiative I have seen from within our industry in India. Our 100% support for this initiative.*

## **Fali D. Palkhivala**

### **Concord Elevators**

*First and foremost, I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely congratulate all who have been involved in the establishment of EEST of India.*

*This is the need of the hour, to introduce the elevator and escalator safety practices to all segments of society.*

*I would be willing to be of assistance/be involved with EEST .*

## **A. Sankarakrishnan**

### **KONE Elevator India Pvt. Ltd.**

*I am pleased to note that a separate trust has been registered for "Elevator and Escalator Safety" in India in line with the Western countries. In India, there is lack of awareness of safety, and organizations like this have a great part to play in inculcating safety awareness while using elevators and escalators.*

*KONE believes that safety is more to do with "ATTITUDE," and attitude leads to the behavior of a person. Over a period of time, this becomes a habit, and culture is formed. Building up a safety culture in our society should be the prime concern for all of us. KONE started this exercise few years back. We educate our end users on safe usage of elevators and escalators through regular mailers. We have also developed a video on safe usage of elevators and escalators, which is being screened in public places like malls and commercial complexes. We also provide continuous training for our customers in safe rescuing of passengers in case of an emergency.*

*I once again wholeheartedly wish this endeavor all success in its initiative, and I am certain this will go a long way in building up the safety culture in India.*

## **M.K. Panicker**

### **Fujitec India Pvt. Ltd.**

*We are extremely happy to note the formation of EEST of India. Congratulations to you, Anitha, and your team for formation of the Trust. The initiatives should improve safety awareness among the urban and semi-urban population of India. We welcome your objective of educating children, adults and senior citizens on safe practices for usage of elevators and escalators. We would be more than pleased to support you for successful implementation of EEST mission.*

*Wishing you and your team the very best!*

## **John K. John**

### **Johnson Lifts Ltd.**

*With the growth in the [number of] elevators and escalators in India, an initiative of this nature is welcome, specifically concentrating on safe use of the equipment. I think specific emphasis should be on escalators, as I feel this is a novelty in many semi-urban centers with the advent of malls and shopping complexes. Women riding escalators wearing saris should also be the focus apart from children. EEST will get our full support and let us know as to how we could assist in meeting your intended goals.*

## **S.M. Hajela**

### **Lift Systems (I) Pvt. Ltd.**

*First let me congratulate you for the idea of creating this trust. Being associated with this industry for more than four decades and being one of the senior-most living elevator men actively connected*

*with the lift industry, it is for me a dream coming true. It is my passion to be associated with the industry and do not want to retire even at the age of 72. I am available to you whatever capacity you deem fit for me.*

*On behalf of myself and my company, I will be too happy to be associated with this cause.*

## **Sundar Parthasarathy**

### **Otis Elevator Co (I) Ltd.**

*The adoption and use of such people-moving systems is on a rapid rise in our country and your initiative could not have come at a more opportune moment. Educating the public at large as well as other industry stakeholders can help ensure the safe use of elevators and escalators, as well as avoid accidents. I wish you, Anitha and all others who are engaged in this very important social endeavor every success.*

## **Uday Kulkarni**

### **Schindler India Pvt. Ltd.**

*This is a most needed initiative, keeping in mind the rapid change in lifestyle, e.g. shopping malls, commercial complexes, which have come up have the latest, hi-tech elevators and escalators. Educating the users, as well the property managers, will create a safe and stress free ambience for the society and people in general.*

## **Dinesh Musalekar**

### **TL Jones India Pvt. Ltd.**

*This is an excellent initiative taken by you on behalf of the elevator industry to fulfill its social obligation. TL Jones, being a pioneer in the elevator passenger safety and information system, would like take active participation in this cause and support you in all possible ways.*

## **R.R. Iyer**

*Congratulations for formation of EEST of India.*

## **Trevor Rodericks**

*Great going. We need this program in India with elevators and escalators mushrooming in big and small towns. Kids, as well as grown ups, are at times scared to use these facilities. A start could be made at the numerous malls and public places where the use is by most people of all "strata." Best of luck for this initiative. When in Mumbai, I would be pleased to help.*

## **Barbara Allen, Executive Director, EESF**

*"The need for elevator and escalator public safety is universal. The U.S. has the Elevator Escalator Safety Foundation, Canada has the Elevator Escalator Safety Foundation of Canada, and now India has the Elevator Escalator Safety Trust. What an enormous move forward for the country of India. The Safe-T Rider program has been proven to positively change riding behavior when administered in the schools and taken home to the parents in both the U.S. and Canada. We feel certain the same will be true in India. Congratulations to you on the insight of the development of such an important entity to promote public safety in India."*

## **Ricia Hendrick, President**

### **Elevator World, Inc.**

*The E&E industry in India has taken a huge step in starting this trust. It is evident that as modern transportation equipment moves into cities where people are unaccustomed to using them, the need for education will grow. TAK Mathews and Anitha Raghunath should be congratulated as should all the companies joining in this support.*

very clear in her advice that the campaign could not work as long as it was run as a part-time effort. It became obvious that a formal and independent organization had to be established to continually keep the eye on the ball.

After a four-hour brainstorming session with Anitha Raghunath (Virgo Communications) on August 15, 2008, it was decided to establish the nonprofit Elevator Escalator Safety Trust (EEST) as an independent trust along the lines of EESF in the U.S. Accordingly, the Trust has now been formed.

An extract from the EEST Deed reads as follows:

*"The purposes for which the trust has been organized and shall be operated are and shall be exclusively charitable, and educational. More specifically the purposes are and shall be to develop and distribute informational and educational materials to, and develop, distribute and conduct informational and educational programs for, the general public on the safe and proper use of elevator and escalator equipment, and to accept and receive gifts, grants, bequest, devices, benefits of trusts (but not act as trustee of any trust), and income from activities directly related to the foregoing described purposes, and to use, disburse, distribute or donate the income or principal thereof for the aforesaid exclusive charitable, and educational and purposes. No part of the net earnings of the corporation shall inure to the benefit of or be distributed to its members, trustees, officers, or other private persons except that the trust shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in this subparagraph. No activities of the corporation shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation; and the trust shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements), any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office."*

The primary objective of the Trust would be to

- ◆ Educate young children on safe practices while using elevators and escalators
- ◆ Educate adults and senior citizens on safe practices while using elevators and escalators
- ◆ Promote of safety awareness amongst property owners and managers

The initial reaction from the industry to this initiative has been very positive and supportive which would indicate that the industry as such has been toiling with this concern. This gives us the optimism that EEST will succeed in its objective and meet the requirement that the VD Shintre (chief engineer, Maharashtra Public Works Department) had voiced at the International Elevator and Escalator Expo 2008.

While EEST will have operational and process support from EESF and ELEVATOR WORLD, success will not be possible without proactive support from the Indian E&E industry and the various E&E client groups. Financial assistance will be a requirement. However, the prerequisite to success will be the sustained support from committed and spirited individuals from the industry with their organization's wholehearted support. It is anticipated that individuals backed by their organizations will adopt schools in their locality and drive the initiative year after year. And with that kind of support, in five years we should achieve our objectives of reaching 500,000 children in India.

Raghunath stated:

*"We are extremely delighted to partner with TAK Mathews for his noble initiative of EEST – a nonprofit organization formed to educate the people on proper usage of E&E. We consider this as an excellent opportunity for us to be socially responsible towards the Industry we serve and work so closely with."*

*"Through IEEEExpo and ELEVATOR WORLD India magazine, we have been successful in creating a platform for the global E&E industry to meet, share knowledge and expand business in India, but addressing the lack of awareness on safety among the buyers and users always remained challenging. The ignorance on this issue among all stakeholders was evident during the IEEEExpo'08 seminars, which had many speakers addressing various aspects of safety, but very few attended to hear them out."*

*"We all have some responsibilities towards our society in making it safe and comfortable to live. And we believe that it is also our responsibility to contribute to the E&E industry by extending our support and helping hand in popularizing the safe usage of vertical transportation systems, which has become an integral part of our daily life."*

*"We hope all industry players would extend their support and co-operation in making this education process a success."*

For more details as to how one can be part of or take advantage of this initiative, contact Mathews at e-mail: [tak.mathews@takconsulting.net](mailto:tak.mathews@takconsulting.net) or Raghunath at e-mail: [Anitha@virgocommunication.com](mailto:Anitha@virgocommunication.com). 

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- Gain an edge over competitors.
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- Maintain a healthy and positive image.

For more information on how you can reach thousands in the Indian elevator, escalator and building industry, visit us at [www.elevatorworldindia.com](http://www.elevatorworldindia.com)