

# \$450m set aside to boost safety of HDB lifts

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About 20,000 lifts are eligible for the new Lift Enhancement Programme. ST PHOTO: AZIZ HUSSIN

**Under new scheme, town councils get 90% funding to install recommended features**

The Government will set aside \$450 million to modernise public housing lifts, and ensure that costs are not a barrier to maintaining high safety standards.

Under the new Lift Enhancement Programme (LEP) announced yesterday, town councils will get 90 per cent funding to install safety features recently recommended by the Building and Construction Authority (BCA) after a series of lift incidents.

About 20,000 lifts are eligible and while no start date has been fixed yet, town councils will have 10 years to take advantage of the scheme.

Explaining the reason for the LEP, National Development Minister Lawrence Wong said yesterday that implementing the extra safety features will pose a considerable financial challenge to town councils if they were to do it alone. "But given the importance of lifts in our daily lives and in our high-rise HDB living environment, the Government is prepared to commit to this additional spending and maintain high safety standards," he said.

Last week, the BCA drew up a list of eight safety-improving features that, while not mandatory, were recommended for all lifts here. These include devices to prevent unintended lift movements and multiple-beam sensors for doors.



The recommendations are part of the BCA's ongoing review into lift safety here. This comes after several accidents that have taken place since last October. In the most serious incident in May, an elderly man died after he fell as his mobility device reversed out of a lift that was not level with the ground.

The Housing Board, which will administer the co-funding scheme, said that of the recommended features, all its lifts already have one - the automatic rescue device. It brings the lift to the nearest landing and allows doors to open during a power failure. But HDB acknowledged some of its older lifts may not be equipped with the more modern features "due to technological advancements".

The LEP is not mandatory but HDB urged town councils to upgrade, "to bring the older lifts to the same standard as newer lifts".

The programme applies to lifts not yet equipped with some or all of the eight features. They must also have been in operation for 18 years or less. "For older lifts, it will make more sense for the town councils to replace them with new lifts which will come with these enhanced features," said Mr Wong.

Town councils already have a lift-replacement regime, in which lifts are generally changed after 28 years. About 24,000 of the 61,000 passenger lifts here are in HDB blocks. More details of the LEP will be shared with the town councils in the coming months.

Bukit Panjang MP Teo Ho Pin, the coordinating chairman for the People's Action Party town councils, said the LEP will reduce the financial burden faced by town councils and help them comply with the BCA's new lift-maintenance requirements.