

Safety in the Use of Escalators

The most common injuries on escalators are brought about by people tripping, falling or becoming trapped. The very young and the elderly are at most risk. Severe trapping injuries to very young children have included amputation, bone fractures and extensive skin tissue and muscle damage. The simple, but essential safety steps given below will help to prevent most accidents on escalators. You may find them useful as a safety check list.

STEP 1 Ensure escalators meet current British and European Standards.

STEP 2 Provide emergency stopping devices at or near escalator landings.

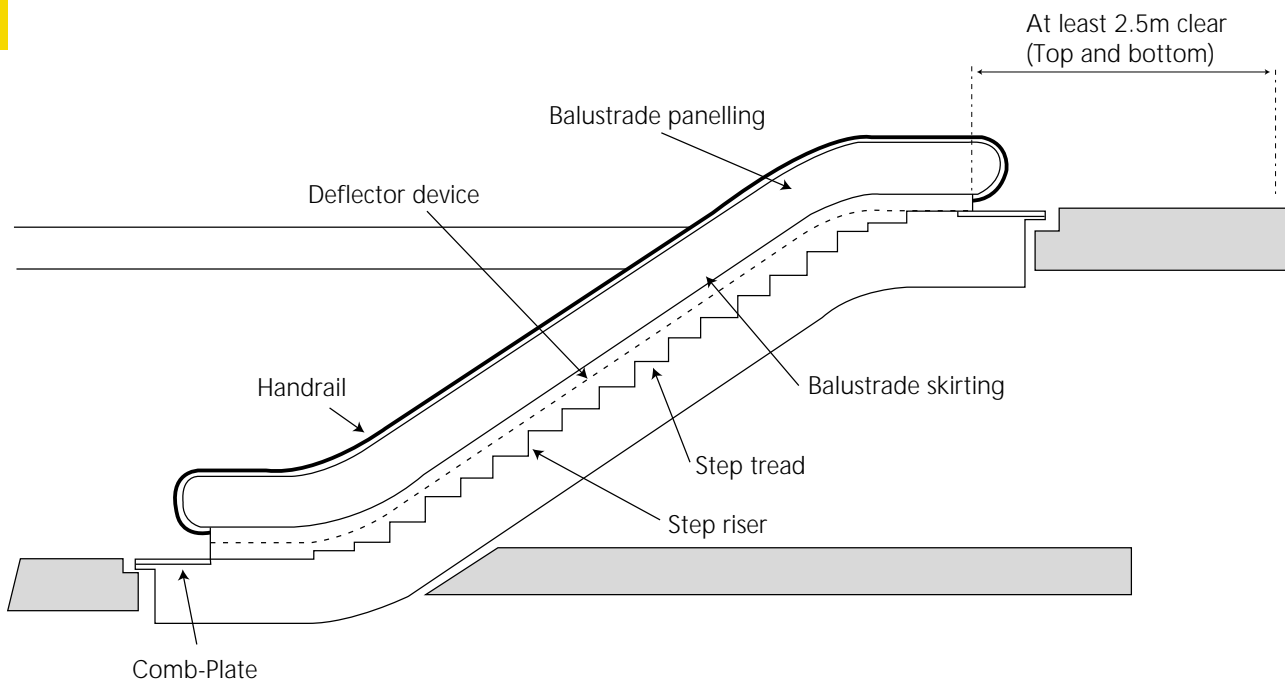
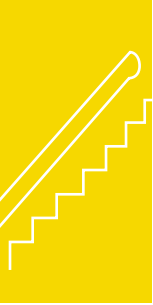
STEP 3 To prevent trapping injuries between the skirting and the moving staircase, ensure that deflectors have been fitted (brush type fixtures which are attached to the skirting panel). If this is not possible, other precautions should be considered e.g. yellow lines.

STEP 4 Keep records of the inspection and maintenance programme for each escalator. A thorough examination must be carried out at least once every six months by a competent person.

STEP 5 Appoint an adequately trained person to carry out visual checks of the major safety aspects of each escalator daily, e.g. visual damage to combplates and stair treads, correct operation of emergency stops and condition and speed of hand rails.

STEP 6 Post conspicuous warning/advisory signs at the upper and lower approaches to each escalator - illustrated with pictograms advising passengers to:- "hold the hand rail", "hold small children firmly", "no pushchairs", "keep feet away from sides", etc.





STEP 7 Provide adequate training, instruction and information to staff to enable them to react promptly in an emergency or if they witness someone misusing the escalator. Request that staff inform management of any accident or "near miss" incident.

STEP 8 Check that there is sufficient lighting, particularly at the top and bottom of the escalator.

STEP 9 Ensure that approaches to escalators and landings are kept free of obstructions and provide a sufficient unrestricted area at landings to reduce the risk of accident caused by passenger congestion.

STEP 10 Position indicator boards to shop departments away from escalator landings so as to avoid shoppers congregating in this area.

STEP 11 Avoid the use of stationary escalators where there are other alternatives. Direct people to other means of access, e.g. lifts or stairs where these would clearly be safer.

case study

A 2 year old child lost 2 toes when her foot became trapped between a badly dented riser of one step and the tread of the step below as the steps were beginning to deform at the top of an upwardly moving escalator. A good programme of maintenance would have prevented this accident.

■ For further information:

Guidance Note PM 34 "Safety in the use of escalators"
Health and Safety Executive
HMSO - ISBN - 0 11 883572 6

Guidance Note PM 45 "Escalators"
Periodic thorough Examination
Health and Safety Executive
HMSO - ISBN - 0 11 883595 5