Cleaning Up in the Aftermath

by Ricia Sturgeon-Hendrick

B y the time you read this, most of us will be out of quarantine and observing a new world where everything seems a little more dangerous — dangerous to breathe and dangerous to touch. This spring, world economies fell off a cliff, the earth and oceans got a needed break from warming, and politicians worldwide tried to explain how well they were handling the crisis. So, this issue is about cleaning in the aftermath. Not just cleaning, though — also making our equipment easier to use without touching and risking infection. We adjusted the editorial schedule to make Disinfection and Cleaning this month’s focus topic and were amazed by the response to it.

In three short months, elevators went from the safest means of travel in the world to stress-filled small cubes. A quote in this issue by Mustafa Kavukcu says it all: “Of the many stressful spaces in a coronavirus-stricken city, elevators are among the most fraught.” COVID-19 has made everyone aware that elevators (particularly in highly trafficked buildings) will be packed. There will be no way to keep “social distance,” and you will have to touch things that many other people have touched. Inventors in our industry (and in others) have been hard at work developing products to ease passengers back into elevators and onto escalators. Five articles emphasize ways to approach Disinfection and Cleaning:

♦ See the Light (Source) by Lawrence Madanda: This Product Spotlight details the HoldSafe handrail sanitizer, which kills 98% of viruses and bacteria on escalator handrails.

♦ “A Cleaner Future” by Kaija Wilkinson: SnapCabs’ R&D department studies nonporous and antimicrobial products to work into the company’s offerings, including Corning® Gorilla® Glass, coatings and air filtration.

♦ A Smart Way to Disinfect: Ashla Systems focuses on elevators using a UV-C light that cleans only when the unit is empty. It kills all bacteria in its wake.

♦ An Old Solution With a Modern-Day Twist by Gregor Vahramian: The article describes a copper-alloy application process that can continuously fight microbes on vertical-transportation equipment.

♦ A Shift in Focus, a Focus on Safety by Wilkinson: President Gianni Cotteta of AdRail USA (U.S. distributor of EHC Global’s escalator handrail) says coronavirus has produced high demand for AdRail’s antimicrobial film for escalators.

♦ Product Spotlight is devoted completely to products in the Focus Topic: button covers, foot-activated call buttons, escalator handrail sterilization units, air and car sanitation kits, KONE pandemic products, antimicrobial cab interiors, several touchfree phone apps that talk to elevators and a pit-cleaning system.

If that weren’t enough, there are many other articles that address the COVID-19 situation. Elevators and Social Distancing suggests an elevator fill rate of three to five in a 21-person unit, along with several technical measures. The New Normal by Chip Nyborg posits many working from home and staggered schedules to have fewer people in office towers. Elevator Usage Instructions in the Framework of COVID-19 by Kavukcu suggests fewer people in elevators, the use of masks, regular cleaning and increased ventilation.

Two articles are reports on recent webinars: How Things Will Change, RE: Urban Density by Lee Freeland was a panel discussion put on by the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat. Presenters addressed challenges arising from COVID-19 and the responsiveness of dense cities to future crises. Another webinar sponsored by Interlift; Elevator World, Inc.; and Virgo Communications, Going Forward by Wilkinson, had more than 1,000 participants from 71 countries. Panelists from the U.S., Europe, South America, China, Africa and India spoke freely about the virus situation in their countries and how governments were assisting.

Our cover story, A Prototype Robot Named “Heidi” by Undine Stricker-Berghoff, is an interview with Christian Studer of Schindler’s R&D about how new ideas are formed in the company. Schindler R.I.S.E (Robotic Installation System for Elevators) is now being tested by select customers. Lovely in Lisbon by Helena Calado details the thysenkrupp modernization of the iconic Bairro Alto Hotel in bohemian Lisbon.

There is much more in this issue, including an introduction to the 2020 Elevator Industry Field Employees’ Safety Handbook; a hilarious article about my old friend Doug Witham (in retirement); and, unfortunately, far too many people I know in In Memoriam.

Stay safe until we see you again.