

Virtual Is the New Normal

by Ricia Sturgeon-Hendrick

This should be called “the summer of our discontent.” You’ve heard the quote, “Men plan, and God laughs.” That seems to describe the last four months – our plans are in constant revision. We have plenty to talk about in this issue, but it is not exactly what we first intended discussing. We had planned to devote this month to contractors.

September is usually a big issue, and celebrating contractors in conjunction with the United 2020 convention and expo, a joint effort of the National Association of Elevator Contractors (NAEC), the Canadian Elevator Contractors Association, Elevator U and the International Association of Elevator Consultants, seemed like a natural choice. However, in the time of COVID-19, things change quickly. United will now be virtual, and most contractors we contacted for articles were overwhelmed. Many we talked to are struggling to do their jobs, with office staff working from home, and mechanics in masks and personal protective equipment (PPE) doing maintenance. But, they are grateful to be working and considered “essential.” Around them, other types of small businesses that have survived world wars and recessions are going belly up. The world is changing in “fast time,” so, this month, instead of focusing on contractors, we celebrate them and include articles about two of the most versatile.

Our cover story features one of the largest contractors in the world building the highest test tower in the Western hemisphere in Atlanta. **A Beacon of Engineering Excellence** by Kaija Wilkinson is all about thyssenkrupp Elevator’s new headquarters, which is changing the skyline in that Southern city forever. The test tower will feature 18 shafts, as well as a three-elevator system including TWIN to transport passengers to an impressive observation area. The final move-in for the more than 900 employees will be late 2021.

Speaking of contractors, **Keeping Tradition** by Craig Zomchek highlights the growth of Colley Elevator, which, at more than 110 years old, is the longest-operating independent elevator company in Chicago. While the virus has had an impact, the company has kept all its mechanics and given back to the community.

As we go to press, construction is only slowly opening back up, and it is maintenance that serves as the lifeblood of the contractor. This is why we chose to focus on **Maintenance** this issue. We have three articles on the topic, including two on escalators:

◆ **Maintenance, The Correct Approach to Raise the Quality** by Erol Akçay: The author writes that the quality of



maintenance greatly affects the lifespan of components. He cites several practices that follow routine but sometimes-disregarded instructions.

- ◆ **How to Set the Escalator Main Drive Chain** by Hassan Sameni gives clear directions for precise setting to improve the maintenance of the escalator engine chain.
- ◆ **Smart Step Measures Escalators’ Heartbeats** by Dr. Ali Albadri is a study of “smart step,” a data-gathering device that measures and monitors the structural integrity of escalators.

It seems this virus will not go away this year, and it continues to affect not only the people in the industry, but also the products we sell, install and maintain. As you go through the Product Spotlight, more than 70% have something to do with cleaning or sanitizing our equipment. There are also several excellent articles on the virus and how to adapt:

- ◆ **Returning After Crisis** by Sheetal Shelar Patil: Richie Lobert, director of LML Lift Consultants, shared some strategies for workplace reentry from a consultant’s point of view.
- ◆ **University COVID-19 Update** by Lee Freeland: In July, the board of Elevator U held a webinar to discuss how various schools within the group were handling elevator work on campuses. Many worked in shifts, and all wore masks and PPE.
- ◆ **VT and COVID-19:** Kaija Wilkinson interviewed Murchison & Cumming, LLP attorney Guy Gruppie about pandemic-related vertical-transportation (VT) litigation. He discussed the consideration of elevators as “common carriers” and how this might apply if someone gets sick from being in one.

Many in our industry are being forced to rethink and adjust plans for their workers, facilities and association events. No one really thinks “virtual” is as good as in-person, but it is a way to move forward. So, I urge you all to work with your people, wear masks, and attend webinars and virtual expos until we can all be together again. We can do this. 🌐