

# Speaking With . . .

## Barbara Allen

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*FacilityCare recently spoke with Barbara Allen, program director for the Elevator Escalator Safety Foundation, about creating safe elevator use for healthcare facilities and the foundation's programs and resources.*

**FACILITY CARE:** What should health care facilities know about elevator safety?

**BARBARA ALLEN:** Young children and senior adults are the two groups most likely to be injured on elevators. Health care facility personnel should know the proper way to use the elevators, set a good example and then keep a watchful eye for passengers' safety. Several rules apply to help keep riders safe.

- Watch your step. Make sure when you enter or exit, the elevator is level with the floor and step over the gap.
- Don't try to stop a closing door with anything, including hands, feet, canes, carts, etc. Wait for the next elevator or ask someone inside to push the "Door Open" button. Ignoring this rule could result in serious physical injury.
- If the doors do not open when the elevator stops, push the Door Open button.
- If there is a fire in the building, use the stairs.
- If the elevator should stop between floors, use the phone or intercom and wait for professional help. Do not attempt to leave the elevator for any reason.
- Use the "Door Open" button to hold doors open for those who are slow to exit and enter or who need assistance. What should health

**FACILITY CARE:** What are common problems health care facilities encounter with elevators, and how can they be addressed?

**BARBARA ALLEN:** Health care facility elevators are used primarily by visitors who are distracted due to injury or illness to loved ones, or by health care providers who may be similarly distracted. Less frequently patients will use the elevators alone; more often they are transported by health care personnel. All of these riders would tend to take elevators for granted and not pay enough attention to their own personal safety. Posting rules prominently near elevators and making safety information (video or printed material) available in common areas (waiting rooms, lounges, cafeterias) would help.

**FACILITY CARE:** How can health care facilities create safer elevator use for their

patients, visitors and staff?

BARBARA ALLEN: Health care facility management can create safer environments for their patients, visitors and staff by first insuring the elevators and escalators in their facility are properly maintained and periodically inspected. Once that is addressed, then managers should take a pro-active approach by first educating their staff on the proper way to ride elevators and escalators. (The Foundation's A Safe Ride video is an excellent tool for training staff on behavior that is inappropriate, particularly when it comes to young children and seniors, the two most at risk groups for injury on this equipment.) ; and then addressing the need to educate visitors to their facility. One obvious way to keep patients, visitors and staff safe on elevators is to post the above rules in and/or near the elevator. Show the Safe-T Rider© video in the pediatric unit and the A Safe Ride® video on the health care facility network TV channel.

FACILITY CARE: What kinds of programs does the Foundation provide?

BARBARA ALLEN: The Foundation provides programs to educate the public on the safe and proper use of elevators, escalators and moving walks. Currently, the Foundation has three programs to disseminate safety materials.

The Safe-T Rider© program is aimed at elementary students. It is distributed free of charge to 2nd grade students throughout the U.S. and Canada. The Foundation, through volunteers, will reach 400,000 second grade students free of charge this school year. Our goal is to reach 1,000,000 children by the year 2000 and every year thereafter.

The A Safe Ride® senior citizens program is aimed at older adults. The components are a 12 minute video, workbooks and a facilitator's guide. The video, however, can be used as a stand alone piece for any adult audience.

National Elevator Escalator Safety Awareness week was established by the industry four years ago and allows industry members to disseminate safety material in their community and in their own personalized way. Safety week is celebrated annually the second full week of November. Many participate by handing out elevator and escalator safety information in buildings, malls or subway systems; some have billboards posted to make the public aware of safety rules, while others get their government officials to sign safety week proclamations. The Foundation has a planning guide with different ideas available to help anyone interested in celebrating.

FACILITY CARE: How can health care facilities become involved with the Foundation?

BARBARA ALLEN: Health care facilities can become involved with the Foundation by disseminating safety material to patients, visitors and staff. The Safe-T Rider© video could be shown in the children's unit and coloring books stressing safety rules while riding elevators, escalators and moving walks distributed. The A Safe Ride® video can be showed on the in-house cable channel and is suitable for adults of all ages. General safety information can be made available. The Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3)

organization and relies on contributions to disseminate safety material. A Health care facility can also get involved by becoming a member of the Foundation to help spread the efforts in their community.

For more information contact Barbara Allen, program director, Elevator Escalator Safety Foundation, P. O. Box 6273, Mobile, Ala. 36660-0273; (334) 479-2199; Fax: (334) 479-7099; Internet: [www.eesf.org](http://www.eesf.org); E-mail: [eesf@earthlink.net](mailto:eesf@earthlink.net)