

**FIRE PROTECTION HISTORY-PART 220: 1912
(EGRESS ELEVATORS)**

By Richard Schulte

The sixteenth Annual Meeting of the National Fire Protection Association was held in Chicago in mid-May 1912. Among the committee reports presented at this meeting was the Report of the Committee on Private Fire Departments and Fire Drills. The following is an excerpt of the report which addresses the use of elevators for egress purposes in “high buildings”:

*“Elevator attendants should be instructed to take cars immediately upon the first sound of the building alarm to the floor indicated and hold themselves subject to the orders of the floor chief. **In high buildings of the fire resistive type, the operator should be instructed to take his elevator into the fire zone and receive passengers and then drop them only a few floors below the fire zone. Employees should be instructed to leave at that point and go down the stairways. If this procedure can be carried out much valuable time and many lives may be saved.**”*

More recently, the National Elevator Code has required that elevators be recalled to the main floor in the event of a fire (where smoke was detected in an elevator lobby). Now, the International Building Code contains incentives where elevators are arranged to utilized for egress purposes in tall buildings.

The concept of utilizing building elevators for egress is not really a new concept, but a concept which was proposed a century ago.

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Source: *“Proceedings of the Sixteenth Annual [NFPA] Meeting”*, Chicago, Illinois, 1912.

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