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Circuit for resetting an elevator safety chain

The present invention relates to elevators and, in particular, to a circuit for resetting an elevator safety chain after service technicians have performed necessary maintenance or inspection operations within an associated elevator shaft.

It is common practice within the elevator field for service technicians to enter an elevator shaft to conduct periodic maintenance or inspection operations. The majority of the required operations can be conducted from either the shaft pit or alternatively throughout the shaft using the roof of an elevator car as a working platform. The frequency of this practice has increased significantly in recent years due primarily to the higher prevalence of machine-room-less installations within the industry whereby elevator components which were traditionally housed in a dedicated, separate machine room are now fully incorporated within the elevator shaft.

Before any such work can be carried out within the shaft, local regulations such as the ASME A17.1-2000 safety code for the United States of America or the EN 81-1:1998 standard throughout Europe stipulate that refuge or safety spaces must be created to protect any service technicians working in the pit or working from the roof of the car. Obviously, the required refuge spaces can be permanently incorporated into the shaft, however, this solution extends the length of the shaft thereby occupying additionally commercial space which could otherwise be utilized by the building owner for another purpose. An alternative solution is to create temporary refuge spaces.

US Patent No. 5,727,657 describes an elevator system wherein a temporary refuge space is created in the pit by pivoting a swivel buffer into the travel path of the car to prevent the car from entering into the pit. A temporary overhead refuge space can be established in a similar fashion by either pivoting a swivel buffer located in the pit into the travel path of the counterweight, or by pivoting a swivel buffer arranged at the shaft ceiling into the travel path of the car.

In order for a worker to be able to climb into the shaft pit, the car is sent to a higher floor. The landing door at the lowermost floor can be unlatched and opened by rotating a bolt within the door frame with a standard triangular key. Furthermore, the rotation of the triangular bolt moves a latching switch into the detent or set position whereby a safety

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chain is interrupted and normal operation of the elevator is prohibited. When the safety chain is thus interrupted, the swivel buffer, or preferably an opposed pair of the swivel buffers, tilts automatically into the travel path of the car and thus blocks the return of the car to the lowermost floor and accordingly a temporary refuge space is created in the pit.

5 Just before, or immediately after the technician climbs into the shaft pit, he can actuate the control off pit switch, required by regulation, so that a multiple interruption of the safety chain is achieved. The maintenance and checking work to be undertaken can now be performed with reduced risk.

10 After completion of the work in the pit, the pit switch is released and the landing door is closed and latched. However, the elevator car still is not yet ready for normal operation because the latching switch of the memory circuit is still in the set position interrupting the safety chain. In order to reset the latching switch and thereby the safety chain which in turn retracts the swivel buffer to the non-active position, the technician must activate a key
15 switch at the elevator control which is located outside the elevator shaft preferably in the machine room or located beside or within a door frame at the uppermost floor of the installation. Not only is this frustrating to the technician who has to mount the stairs from one extremity of the building to the other but it is time consuming and therefore costly to the building owner. Furthermore, during this procedure, there is a complete lack of
20 supervision at the landing door where the latching switch is in the set position so feasibly a person, for example another technician, could open the landing door and enter the shaft, unknown to the technician. Upon activation remote activation of the key switch, the safety chain is re-established, the temporary refuge spaces are automatically removed and the elevator resumes normal operation placing the person in the shaft in an extremely
25 dangerous situation.

An objective of the present invention is overcome the disadvantages associated with the prior art. This objective is achieved by providing a circuit for resetting a component within an elevator safety chain. The reset circuit comprises a first reset switch and a door
30 contact. The first reset switch is mountable within an elevator shaft. The door contact is mountable alongside an elevator landing door. The first reset switch and the door contact are arranged in series so that both must be closed to reset the component whereby, upon activation, the first reset switch remains closed for a first predetermined time period after which it returns to its open state.

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Accordingly, the invention permits the technician to reset the elevator safety chain directly from the landing by closing the landing door to activate the door contact. The imposition of a first predetermined time period within which the reset sequence must be completed firstly dramatically reduces the risk of inadvertently resetting of the safety chain and
5 secondly forces the technician to make a conscious decision to reset the safety chain since any delay or interruption will extend the time taken beyond the first predetermined time period in which case the entire procedure will have to be repeated until such time as is completed within the first predetermined time period.

10 The first reset switch can be accessible from the landing when the landing door is open and is preferably mounted above the landing door. Thereby, the technician can activate the first reset switch by simply reaching through the open landing door and into the shaft to activate the first reset switch and according all stages of the reset sequence are initiated by the technician while standing outside of the shaft.

15 Preferably, the first reset switch is an interval delay relay.

The first predetermined time period can be set to be marginally greater than the time taken for the landing door to close automatically. Upon activation of the first reset switch,
20 the technician need only withdraw his hand from the shaft and release the landing door from its fully open position. Such action should generally be completed within 2s. Subsequently, the door will automatically move under bias to its closed position which, for example, may take 6s. Accordingly, in this situation, the first predetermined time period should be set to 8s. Naturally the first switch can be positioned such that the door need
25 not be fully opened to activate the switch in which case the first predetermined time period can be reduced preferably to less than five seconds.

To improve security and longevity, the circuit can further comprise a second reset switch mountable external to the shaft and arranged in series with the first reset switch and the
30 door contact. This necessarily increases the reset sequence and consequently the first predetermined time limit should be increased but should preferably be less than ten seconds. Preferably, the second reset switch remains closed for a second predetermined time period after which it returns to its open state and more preferably it is an interval delay relay. The second predetermined time period should be set to reflect the operating
35 parameters of the component within the elevator safety chain. In particular, the second

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time must be sufficiently long to enable the reset of the elevator safety chain component, however should not be so excessive as to damage or burn out the component.

5 The invention also provides an elevator comprising a car vertically displaceable within a shaft, a plurality of landing doors and a safety chain. In use, if one of the landing doors is opened without the simultaneous presence of the car at that level, the safety chain is broken and the car is prevented from further travel. The elevator further comprises a reset circuit as described above to reset the safety chain. The first reset switch can be mounted to a door frame and preferably to either to an upper transverse section or a side portion of
10 the door frame. In the preferred embodiment, the elevator safety chain component is a bi-stable safety switch which interrupts the safety chain when the landing door is opened without the simultaneous presence of the car at that level.

The present invention is hereinafter described by way of specific examples with reference
15 to the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is a general schematic of an elevator incorporating a reset circuit according to the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of the landing door at the lowermost floor of FIG. 1 as viewed from the front or hall side thereof;

20 FIG. 3 is an enlarged fragmentary view of the unlatching and release device shown in the FIG. 2 before actuation;

FIG. 4 is a view similar to FIG. 3 showing the unlatching and release device upon actuation;

FIG. 5 is a view similar to the FIG. 4 showing the unlatching and release device after the
25 actuation and before resetting;

FIG. 6 is a schematic showing a reset circuit according to the preferred embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 7a is a graphical representation of the operating conditions of the first interval delay relay of FIG. 6;

30 FIG. 7b is a graphical representation of the operating conditions of the door contact of FIG. 6;

FIG. 7c is a graphical representation of the operating conditions of the second interval delay relay of FIG. 6; and

FIG. 7d is a graphical representation of the operating conditions of the elevator safety
35 chain.

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FIG.1 shows an elevator arranged within a building. The elevator comprises a car 1 and a counterweight 5 which are supported on a load carrying element 3 by pulleys 6. The load carrying element 3 is fixed at either end and is driven by a traction sheave 4 to vertically
5 displace the car 1 and the counterweight 5 in opposite directions along associated guide rails (not shown) mounted within a shaft 2. When the car 1 is level with any landing, passengers can enter or exit the car 1 through the respective landing door 13a, 13b, 13c, 13d.

10 When a service technician is required to enter the elevator shaft 2, for example to conduct periodic maintenance or inspection operations, bolts 11 are extended from the bottom of the car 1. As shown in specifically in FIG. 1, the car 1 is prevented from moving along its normal travel path into a pit 7 of the elevator shaft 2 through the engagement of the extended bolts 11 with a first set of buffers or brackets 9 secured to the guide rails or
15 mounted to the shaft walls, thereby creating a temporary refuge space in the pit 7. Similarly, a temporary overhead refuge space is created between a shaft ceiling 8 and the roof of the car 1 through the engagement of the extended bolts 11 with a second set of buffers or brackets 10 mounted at a higher position within the shaft 2. Such arrangements are further described in EP-A1-1602615 and US 7,258,202. After the required refuge
20 spaces have been created, the service technician can safely enter the pit 7 through the lowermost landing door 13a.

As shown in FIG. 2 the lowermost landing door 13a comprises a fast panel 14a and a slow panel 14b which telescope past each other to open and close the entrance to the
25 shaft 2. The door 13a is bound at the bottom by a sill 15 and is surrounded by a door frame 19 consisting of two side portions and an upper transverse section 19a. A reset push button 30 is mounted inside the shaft 3 on the upper transverse section 19a of the door frame 19 and is accessible to a technician standing on the sill 15 through the open landing door 13a.

30 A triangular bolt 18 and a small hole 19b are provided in a side portion of the door frame 19 and are normally covered by screw lids (not shown) or a slide (not shown). In order to gain access to the pit 7, the service technician rotates the bolt 18 using a standardized triangular key. This action not only unlatches and permits the technician to manually open
35 the door 13a, but simultaneously sets a memory circuit and interrupts an elevator safety

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chain 23, as illustrated in the FIGS. 3, 4 and 5. With the landing door 13a open, the technician can reach into the shaft 2 and actuate a pit switch 17, required by regulation in the pit 7, to ensure that a multiple interruption of the safety chain 23 is achieved. The maintenance and inspection work to be undertaken can now be performed with reduced risk.

The bolt 18 and the memory circuit are components of an unlatching and release device 26 as shown in FIGS. 3, 4 and 5. The memory circuit includes a bi-stable, safety switch 21 and a resetting element in the form of an electromagnet 20 which forces the safety switch 21 to an initial setting as shown in the FIG. 3. The switch 21 has a first pair of contacts connected to a pair of signal lines 21a and 21b which, in the initial setting, are bridged by a switch element 21c. The signal lines 21a and 21b and the safety switch 21 form a branch of the elevator safety chain 23.

The actuation of the memory circuit takes place by way of a switching cam 22 coupled to the triangular bolt 18. When the triangular bolt 18 is rotated through a predetermined angle, a switch actuator rod 21d of the safety switch 21 is moved by the rotated cam 22 into a detent setting or set position as shown in the FIG. 4 and remains in this setting after the release of the triangular bolt 18. The actuator rod 21d is coupled to the switch element 21c which is moved away from the first set of switch contacts, thereby interrupting the safety chain 23, to bridge a second set of switch contacts. Upon release, the bolt 18 is rotated by a spring force to the initial position as shown in the FIG. 5. However, the switch element 21c and the actuator rod 21d remain in the detent or set position. As discussed above, activation of the pit switch 17 further interrupts the elevator safety chain 23 as shown in FIG. 5.

Once the required work has been completed in the shaft 2, the technician can reset the pit switch 17 whereby the unlatching and release device 26 reverts back to the condition as shown in FIG. 4. However, in this condition the elevator is prevented from returning to normal service because the safety chain 23 is still interrupted by the bi-stable, safety switch 21 which remains at the detent setting or set position.

A circuit 34 for resetting the safety switch 21 is shown in FIG. 6. After resetting the pit switch 17, the technician, while standing on the sill 15, presses the reset push button 30 mounted inside the shaft 2 on the upper transverse section 19a of the door frame 19

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through the open landing door 13a. This in turn activates a first interval delay relay 31 at time t_0 which remains closed for a first predetermined time period Δt_1 after which it returns to its open state as shown in FIG. 7a (wherein logic 1 represents the relay 31 in a closed condition and logic 0 represents the relay 31 in an open condition). The first time period Δt_1 strictly defines the timeframe in which all of the following actions must be taken in order to reset the safety switch 21.

Next, at time t_1 , the technician closes the door 13a and a door contact 33 closes upon the reset circuit 34, as shown in FIG. 7b, confirming that the door 13a has been closed and locked.

Finally, at time t_2 , the technician activates a second interval delay relay 32 by inserting a small screw driver 16 through the hole 19b in the landing door frame 19. The second interval delay relay 32 remains closed for a second predetermined time period Δt_2 as shown in FIG. 7c.

So long as the first interval delay relay 31, the door contact 33 and the second interval delay relay 32 are simultaneously closed onto the reset circuit 34 for the second time period Δt_2 , sufficient energy is provided to the electromagnet 20 at time t_3 through power supply lines 20a and 20b to shift the switch element 21c and the actuator rod 21d to the left and back to the initial position shown in the FIG. 3. Accordingly, the pit switch 17 and the switch element 21c complete the safety chain and the elevator automatically returns to normal operation as represented in FIG. 7d. The second time period Δt_2 must be sufficiently long to enable the energized electromagnet 20 to reset the safety switch 21, however should not be so excessive as to damage or burn out the electromagnet 20. In the present embodiment the acceptable range is between 0.2s and 0.5s and the second time period Δt_2 is set to 0.3s.

Although the invention has been described above specifically for arrangement at the lowermost landing door 13a, it will be appreciated that the invention can equally be applied to any landing door through which the service technician gains access to the shaft 2 in order to carry out his work. For example, to gain access to the roof of the car 1, a technician will generally call the car 1 to one of the upper floors. Upon arrival, he will enter the car 1, register a call for a lower floor and immediately leave the car 1. Once the landing door subsequently closes, the car 1 starts to descend and a short time thereafter

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the technician will unlatch the landing door by rotating an associated triangular bolt 18. As before, such action will simultaneously set a memory circuit, interrupt the elevator safety chain 23 and thereby stop the car 1. Upon manually opening the landing door, the roof of the car should be easily accessible. However, before mounting the roof, the technician must press a stop switch (equivalent to the pit switch 17) provided on the car roof to ensure multiple interruption of the safety chain 23. Thereafter, using a car mounted inspection control device, the technician can drive the car at inspection speed along the restricted travel path (defined by the first set buffers 9 and the second set of buffers 10 as shown in FIG. 1) to carry out the required maintenance and inspection operations from the top of the car 1. The triangular bolt 18, the memory circuit, the safety chain branch 23 and the resetting circuit 34 used for this upper landing door are identical to, and operate in exactly the same way, as those shown and described in relation to the lowermost landing door 13a with the sole exception that the car mounted stop switch replaces the pit switch 17.

In an alternative embodiment, the second switch 32 can be a conventional bi-stable switch without interval delay action.

Although the preferred embodiment requires a three stage sequence (activation of the first interval delay relay 31, closing door 13a to close the door contact 33 and activation of the second interval delay relay 32) to reset the safety switch 21 and thereby the safety chain 23, it will be appreciated that the invention can be simplified while maintaining many of its advantages by eliminating the second interval delay relay 32 and the related third stage of the resetting sequence.

The first predetermined time period Δt_1 , established by activating the first interval delay relay 31, should be sufficiently short so that safety switch 21 and safety chain 23 will not be reset if there is even a slight delay or interruption to the reset sequence. In such a case, the sequence will need to be repeated until it is completed within the time period Δt_1 . For the three stage reset sequence used in the preferred embodiment, the first predetermined time period Δt_1 should be less than 10s. For the two stage sequence described in the paragraph immediately above, the first predetermined time period Δt_1 should be only marginally greater than the time it takes for the landing door to close and preferably less than 5s.

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In an alternative embodiment, the reset push button 30 can be mounted one of the side portions of the door frame 19 within the shaft 2 instead of on the upper transverse section 19a.

Claims

1. A circuit (34) for resetting a component (21) within an elevator safety chain (23) comprising;
5 a first reset switch (31) mountable within an elevator shaft (2); and
a door contact (33) mountable alongside a landing door (13);
wherein the first reset switch (31) and the door contact (33) are arranged in series
so that both must be closed to reset the component (21);
CHARACTERISED in that upon activation, the first reset switch (31) remains
10 closed for a first predetermined time period (Δt_1) after which it returns to its open
state.
2. A circuit (34) according to claim 1, wherein the first reset switch (31) is accessible
15 from the landing when the landing door (13) is open.
3. A circuit (34) according to claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the first reset switch (31) is
preferably mountable above the landing door (13).
4. A circuit (34) according to any preceding claim, wherein the first reset switch (31)
20 is an interval delay relay.
5. A circuit (34) according to any preceding claim, wherein the first predetermined
time limit (Δt_1) is set to be marginally greater than the time taken for the landing
door (13) to close automatically.
- 25 6. A circuit (34) according to any preceding claim, wherein the first predetermined
time limit (Δt_1) is less than five seconds.
7. A circuit (34) according to any of claims 1 to 4 further comprising a second reset
30 switch (32) mountable external to the shaft (2) and arranged in series with the first
reset switch (31) and the door contact (33).
8. A circuit (34) according to any claim 7, wherein the first predetermined time limit
(Δt_1) is less than ten seconds.

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9. An elevator comprising a car (1) vertically displaceable within a shaft (2), a plurality of landing doors (13) and a safety chain (23) whereby, in use, if one of the landing doors (13) is opened without the simultaneous presence of the car (1) at that level, the safety chain (23) is broken and the car (1) is prevented from further travel
- 5 CHARACTERISED in further comprising a reset circuit (34) according to any of the preceding claims.
10. An elevator according to claim 9, wherein the first reset switch (31) is mounted to a door frame (19).