



**WORKERS AT RISK**  
Restaurant/hotel staff  
Elevator technicians  
Restaurant inspectors  
Building inspectors  
Emergency responders

# Dumbwaiters Can Kill

## Interlocks on Doors Prevent Tragedy

Older buildings may have dumbwaiters that don't have interlocks to prevent serious, even fatal injuries. No one should be allowed to operate a dumbwaiter until interlocks are installed and working properly.

### Why does a dumbwaiter need interlocks?

All dumbwaiters must have functioning interlocks on doors, as specified by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME E A17.3-2011). The interlocks prevent a dumbwaiter from operating until all doors are closed. They also prevent doors from opening until the cart is in position for loading or unloading. Without interlocks, people are at risk of falling down the dumbwaiter shaft or being crushed by the cart.

### How can I tell if a dumbwaiter does not have interlocks?

- Can you make the dumbwaiter cart travel up or down when any access door is open?
- Can you open an access door when the dumbwaiter cart is not at your floor?

If you answered **yes** to either of these questions then your dumbwaiter does not have a functioning interlock. Stop using the dumbwaiter immediately and contact an elevator service company.

A dumbwaiter is a small freight elevator used to transport food and dishes between floors. It travels along rails inside an elevator shaft. The movement is controlled by a rope and pulley system that is powered by an electrical motor. There is an access door on each floor for loading or unloading transported items.

### New York Restaurant Owner Fatally Crushed

A 30 year-old restaurant owner in Schenectady, NY was fatally crushed by a dumbwaiter cart in the basement kitchen. The victim's head was caught between the upper door frame and the cart as it was moving up. Read more at [health.ny.gov/environmental/investigations/face](http://health.ny.gov/environmental/investigations/face)



This is the dumbwaiter involved in the Schenectady, NY incident. There were no interlocks on the dumbwaiter. The doors were nailed in the open position. Workers were supposed to use a bell, which is not an appropriate communication control, to alert staff on the other floor before starting the dumbwaiter. In fact, the bell was broken.

## Restaurant Worker Plummets Down Dumbwaiter Shaft

A young waitress fell down a dumbwaiter shaft suffering fatal injuries while working at an Oklahoma City, OK restaurant. The victim was loading the dumbwaiter on the first floor when it malfunctioned. The cart along with the victim fell to the basement floor.

## Waitress Tragically Killed

A 21 year-old college student who was working as a waitress at a local restaurant in Fountain City, WI suffered a fatal head injury while operating a dumbwaiter. The victim's head was crushed by the descending cart against the second floor door frame.

### How can I prevent dumbwaiter-related injuries?

- **Install interlocks.** Have an elevator technician inspect the dumbwaiter to make sure that all access doors have a functioning interlock as specified by ASME.
- **Test interlocks.** Conduct routine tests and maintenance to make sure that all interlocks work properly. The dumbwaiter should not move unless the access doors are closed and the doors cannot be opened until the dumbwaiter is in loading position.
- **Use an intercom system** to communicate between floors. Workers should never use the dumbwaiter shaft to talk to each other.
- **Train employees** so that they are aware of dumbwaiter hazards and know how to operate it safely. Workers should not tamper with the interlocks.
- **Post signs** to warn users of crushing and falling hazards associated with dumbwaiters.

### For more information

#### Dumbwaiter Case Report 12NY033

[www.health.ny.gov/environmental/investigations/face/12ny033.htm](http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/investigations/face/12ny033.htm)

#### New York State Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation

<http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/investigations/face/>



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