



Refinishing Elevators Restores Grandeur

by Lisa Wainland

It happens slowly. Then one day...Gasp! The beautiful elevators in your building show the wear of time. Scratches have aged your elevators, dragging down the elegance your residents demand. Suddenly the subtle changes become glaring eyesores. Left untouched, the protective coating on the elevator is breached, allowing moisture to get to the metal. Eventually, corrosion will set in and the elevators will go from bad to worse.

Residents are very particular about the look of their building. Sub-par looking elevators are bothersome to see and an embarrassment when guests visit. The fix is simple. Elevator refinishing can transform your aged elevators into new. The difference is stunning. Finishing erases the marks of time and brings back shine where it has faded. For elevator cabs

with scratched woodwork, finishing can restore the look of the original grain. Renewing your elevators will transform the look of your building.

Case Study

A good example of this type of transforming project was completed on a high-rise condominium's elevators. Years of use had scratched the panels and damaged the frame. Inside the cab, the wood railings had faded due to people leaning on them. In some places, the wood was chipped.

The residents were upset with the appearance and had complained about it. The board wanted to rectify the situation in a cost-effective and timely manner that would cause the least amount of disruption to their residents. The solution that was offered to them was to refinish the elevators.

Refinishing—it sounds simple, but, in reality, the care taken in doing the work is as important as the work itself. It all begins with the finishers. Finishing is an art and, when done correctly, produces exceptional results that

last over time. Experience and professionalism are hallmarks of a good finishing company. This extends into the finisher's attire and conduct: all finishers on the project should wear booties and work in such a manner so as to not disrupt or inconvenience your residents. They should share your concern for the building and the people who reside in it.

The project was started by first protecting the areas around the elevator. Everything was masked off; paper or plastic was applied to the floor inside and outside the elevator. For the walls and panels, different tapes were used depending on the surface that

needed protecting. Special tape was applied for delicate surfaces such as wallpaper. Refinishing requires the use of powerful chemicals. If care is not taken, areas around the elevator can get damaged. Skill, preparation, and organization are a must.

Once the elevators were prepped, work began. A unique method was used that keeps the grain in the metal straight for a more uniform look. This creates even lines rather than swirls or curve patterns in the metal. Pits and scratches are also removed in the metal returning it to a smooth, unblemished look.

Depending on the needs of your residents, elevators can be strictly refinished or a new look can be created. If change is wanted or needed, that can be done to custom specifications. Existing metal can take on a new look through the use of color additives to the coating. For example, a special tint can be added to make brass look more like gold material. It is amazing how refinishing or making a simple shift in the color of the elevators can transform the lobby!



Before



After



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The condominium's elevators had a rich mahogany wood railing around the inside of the cab. Scratches and small chips marred the wood with light flecks that had become an obvious eyesore. By refinishing the wood, the rail was returned to its original look, smooth and uniform in color and feel. A protective coating was applied to both the metal and the wood creating a hard shell. This provides high scratch resistance and prevents discoloration from UV rays, protecting your investment.

Throughout the course of an entire project, it is a necessity to remain very cognizant of the importance of neatness and organization. No resident wants to see a sloppy lobby. All chemicals and supplies were contained to the work area so the residents were not inconvenienced in any way or bothered by a mess.

Upon completion of the job, a walk-through was conducted to ensure all work was done properly. Any spots that may have been missed were fixed. The result was like-new, shining elevators that enhanced the lobby, beautified the building, and reminded the residents why they love living there.

What to Know

Elevator refinishing can be an unobtrusive process that creates beautiful results... if done correctly. In the hands of the wrong company, the experience will be far different. Many companies simply scour the elevator metal with an abrasive pad leaving streaks with different angles and uneven lines. Some

companies will ignore the pits and scratches in the metal, merely scrubbing over the areas, and not taking the time to remove the problem areas. Others do not take the time and care in the prep work to ensure no damage is done to flooring, wallpaper, or woodwork.

Before hiring a company that does refinishing, find out:

- What is their method of refinishing?
- What type of prep work do they do?
- Do they remove pits and scratches?
- Can they refinish the wood?
- Do they coat the metal and wood?
- Are they insured?

Make sure you compare apples to apples when choosing a company. Some companies offer a very low price, but do quick, shoddy work. If not done properly, an inexpensive job can exceed all other estimates in the cost of repairing mistakes. Common problems include uneven lines, an inferior coating that breaks down and peels, damage to the surrounding area, and sloppy work that inconveniences your residents.

There are different companies and different methods of refinishing. What your residents are looking for, as well as the quality they demand, should weigh heavily on your decision. The right company will make refinishing your elevators an uplifting experience.

Lisa Wainland is Director of Customer Service for Atlantic Finishing, a metal and wood finishing company in South Florida. For more information, visit www.amfinishing.com. ■



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