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Tower elevators to get a major “lift” this spring

Major Benefits of Tower Elevator Project

- Elevator operation will require far less energy than what the current motor-generator system uses, with an estimated 50 percent savings in total energy usage.
- The new motors, when combined with a solid-state drive system, will return re-generated power back to the grid for additional power savings.
- The energy efficiency will reduce the mechanical stresses, meaning less wear and tear (and longer life), on elevator parts and equipment.

When riding in an elevator, we are often more focused on our destination rather than the intricacies of elevator technology and operation. In fact, most people probably have no idea that elevators can detect the number of passengers inside them and then adjust the power level to operate at peak performance—just one of the many advances that came about when elevators became computerized in the 1990s.

The technological change was probably the single greatest improvement in the reliability of elevator operation. Gone were the mechanical timers for door operation and acceleration, and the manually set resistors to regulate speed. Today, thousands of calculations per minute are performed by a microprocessor, which in turn sends instructions to the elevators to pick up and deliver passengers. You could say the computerized elevator was a predecessor of the self-driving car.

When you visit the UT Tower, you can make your way up to any of the 27 floors either by taking the stairs or by riding in one of the two tower elevators. The original elevators were installed in the 1930s and were manned by an *elevator operator* (a near-extinct profession), who would manually open and close the doors, control the car movement and speed, greet passengers, and announce the floor number upon arrival. Later, the technology allowed for more autonomous operation, and passengers were able to press a button and proceed to their destination without assistance. The technology used to operate the current tower elevators dates back to the 1950s, with the most recent improvements and alterations made in 1980.

After decades of wear and tear, along with major advancements in elevator technology, the time has come to bring a long-awaited improvement project to fruition. Beginning this spring, the two existing tower elevators will be retired and replaced with state-of-the-art, energy-efficient elevator cars and operational equipment.

The project is scheduled to begin around the end of the spring semester, and will cost in excess of \$2 million. A contract has been awarded to Tejas Elevator Company to perform the work. The elevators will be replaced one at a time to ensure that one is always up and running, and the entire project will take about two years to complete.



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