



ARISE ELEVATORS
HOUSTON, TEXAS

FREE GUIDE

The Commercial Elevator Maintenance Contract Buyer's Guide

*How Houston property managers should evaluate — and negotiate
— their elevator maintenance contracts before signing.*



A FREE RESOURCE FROM ARISE ELEVATORS

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1 Who this guide is for

You manage a commercial building (or a portfolio of them). Your current elevator maintenance contract expires in the next 18 months, or you inherited a contract when you took over the building, or you just realized you've never read the one you're under. You want to know what a fair contract looks like, what clauses to negotiate, and how to avoid the two mistakes property managers make most often.

This is that guide. It's written by a technician who spent 20 years inside the majors before starting his own shop — so the playbook you're about to read is the one the majors' own sales people use against you.

2 The five mistakes property managers make

Mistake #1 — Not reading the auto-renewal clause until it's too late

What it looks like: Your contract is a 5-year agreement with a 90- or 120-day cancellation window before auto-renewal. The window is buried in the 3rd page of the original proposal. You remember signing something 4 years ago but not the exact date. By the time you start shopping around, you're already 5 months into your 5th year — and contractually locked in for another 5.

What to do instead: On day one of a new contract, put two calendar reminders in your system — one 180 days before auto-renewal, one 120 days before. Pull the contract out of the filing system. Read exactly how the cancellation window works. You might need to send certified mail; plain email sometimes doesn't count.

The tell: Any contract that doesn't explicitly allow month-to-month renewal after year one is optimized for the provider, not for you.



Mistake #2 — Treating the "\$X per elevator per month" number as the price

What it looks like: The proposal says "\$150 per elevator per month" — you assume that's what maintenance costs. Then you get a bill for a door operator rebuild at \$2,400, and you realize the "maintenance" contract didn't cover parts, extended-hours work, post-inspection corrections, or anything that happened after 3 elevators got added to the scope mid-term.

What to do instead: The real price is the monthly rate *plus* the average annual add-on spend. Ask your current provider for the last 12 months of invoices on any building you manage. The median extra billing is usually 30–60% of the base contract. That's the real number.

The tell: A contract that doesn't have a published "what's included / what's excluded" line-item list is a contract that's designed for surprise invoices. Demand the list in writing before signing.

Mistake #3 — Not knowing what "obsolete parts" actually means

What it looks like: Your 2018-installed hydraulic elevator fails a door interlock. The provider says the part is "obsolete" and the equipment is "end of life." They quote a modernization proposal. Cost: \$150,000.

What's really happening: "Obsolete" almost always means "the OEM stopped stocking the original part," not "the part can't be sourced." Aftermarket distributors, other OEMs, or local fabrication can usually produce the same part — often at a fraction of the cost. The reason the provider didn't tell you that is because modernization revenue is 50x the revenue on a door repair.

What to do instead: Get a second opinion from any licensed, non-captive elevator contractor before approving any "end of life" or "full modernization" quote on equipment under 20 years old. Ask specifically: "Is this part genuinely unavailable, or is it just not stocked by the OEM?"

Mistake #4 — Confusing "24/7 service" with "24/7 response"

What it looks like: The contract says "24/7 emergency service." Your elevator breaks at 9pm on a Friday. You call. You get an answering service. The tech shows up Saturday afternoon. Your tenants were stuck for 18 hours.

What's really happening: "24/7 service" means they take calls 24/7 — which 99% of elevator contractors do. It doesn't commit to a response time. Most major contracts don't commit to any specific response time in writing.



What to do instead: Negotiate a specific written callback SLA (time from call to a technician's voice on the line) and a specific written on-site SLA (time from call to physical arrival at the building). Get both into the signed contract. If the provider won't commit either in writing, that's the answer to your question about their actual response.

Fair SLA targets for commercial maintenance contracts in the Houston metro: - **Callback SLA:** Under 30 minutes for business hours, under 60 minutes for after-hours. (At Arise Premium, we commit to 15 minutes in writing — the market baseline is longer.) - **On-site SLA:** Under 2 hours for Zone 1 emergency, under 4 hours for outer zones.

Mistake #5 — Signing without a price-match clause

What it looks like: You shop around, get a quote from three providers, sign with the one you like. A year later, a peer PM tells you they're paying 15% less for identical scope. You're stuck until renewal.

What to do instead: Include a price-match clause. Any licensed competitor offering the same scope for a lower written quote triggers a price adjustment. Most reputable independents will sign one. Most majors won't — which tells you something.

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The 10-point contract checklist

Use this to evaluate any commercial elevator maintenance contract before signing. If 7 or more are missing, walk away.

Fundamentals

- ■ **Initial term is 1 year or less.** Month-to-month after year one. No 5-year evergreen.
- ■ **Cancellation window is at least 90 days** with plain-email notice accepted (not only certified mail).
- ■ **Specific written callback SLA** in the contract body, not just the proposal.
- ■ **Specific written on-site SLA** per response tier (emergency vs. non-emergency).

Scope clarity

- ■ **Complete line-item "what's included" list.** Every covered service explicitly named.
- ■ **Complete line-item "what's excluded" list.** No vague "out-of-scope" language.



- ■ **Pricing for excluded work is published** — labor rate per hour, parts markup percentage, emergency premium percentage.

Price protection

- ■ **Price-match clause.** Any licensed competitor quote for comparable scope triggers adjustment.
- ■ **No automatic annual escalator.** Annual increases capped (e.g., CPI) or negotiated at renewal.

Accountability

- ■ **Named point-of-contact** on the provider's side (not a "your account manager team").
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How Arise's contracts are structured

(Not because we're the right fit for every building — but because this is what the checklist above actually looks like in practice.)

Standard tier — \$150 / elevator / month

- Term:** 12 months initial, month-to-month after year one
- Cancellation:** 30-day notice, plain email
- Included:** All 6 ASME A17.1 § 8.6 MCP modules (mechanical, electrical, safety, fire/ADA, housekeeping, documentation), monthly visit, priority emergency dispatch, TDLR inspection coordination
- Excluded (published in contract):** Parts on non-wear items, vandalism damage, modernization scope. Labor rate and parts markup published.
- SLAs:** Callback under 60 minutes business hours; on-site under 2 hours Zone 1 emergency.

Premium tier — \$220 / elevator / month

- Everything in Standard, plus:**
- Parts covered** on in-scope wear items (door operators, contactors, rollers, relays)



- Callback SLA:** 15 minutes, 24/7, in writing
- Named dedicated technician** on your account
- Annual TDLR inspection** included (coordination + mechanic attendance)
- Priority modernization consulting** at no charge

Price-match guarantee

On both tiers: bring a written proposal from any licensed competitor for comparable scope. We'll match or beat it.

Free contract review

Already under contract with another provider? Send it to us. We'll read it line-by-line, find your cancellation window, flag any early-termination clauses that currently apply, and return a written review within 24 hours. No switch required.

[Send your contract →](#)

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What to do with this guide

- 1 Pull your current maintenance contract out of the filing system (or ask your previous PM for it). Open it and read the renewal / cancellation section. Calendar the deadline.
 - 2 Apply the 10-point checklist to your current contract. Count what's missing.
 - 3 If 7 or more are missing, you have a weak contract. Time to shop.
 - 4 Get three competing quotes. Use the checklist to compare.
 - 5 Negotiate the weakest items before signing.
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About the author



Fares Al-Salim spent 25+ years as an elevator technician at the major national service companies — working hands-on across Schindler, Dover, Westinghouse, Thyssen, Otis, Kone, Fujitec, and Mitsubishi equipment. He founded Arise Elevators in Houston in 2023 to give property managers and building owners the service experience they used to get from the majors before the majors got too big.

Arise Elevators is a licensed, insured, owner-operated commercial elevator service company based at 10924 Grant Rd, Houston, TX 77070. We service commercial buildings across a 100-mile radius of Houston.

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READY WHEN YOU ARE

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