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Campus elevators are unclean and faulty

By Journalism 220
Contributors

Rickety elevator rides with questionable odors. Rumbling noises between floors. Uncertainty about whether the elevator will work.

This is the reality for many students that use campus elevators.

"I don't feel like I'm in danger, like I'm gonna fall a thousand feet, but I feel uneasy. I use an elevator, and it's a surprise when it works," public health major Junior Laforest, a junior, said.

In addition to those concerns, expired certificates of operation are on display in several elevators on campus. A review in September revealed that at least 13 of 50 elevators on campus had an expired document posted, some with expiration dates as recent as July, but with one dating as far back as 2020.

Leigh Appleby is the spokesperson of the Connecticut Department of Administrative Services, which oversees the state Bureau of Elevators.

"If the certificate is not updated at the time of inspection, it gets identified as a violation and issued to the owner to rectify," Appleby said. "It is also often the case that the new certificate is available, but the facilities manager hasn't put it in the elevator."

Edward Gleason, director of Environmental Health and Safety at the university, is responsible for coordinating repairs and elevator maintenance. He says certificates of operation are not always the most accurate source of information.

"The elevator certificate of operation has nothing to do with the maintenance schedule," Gleason said.

Gleason said inspections happen every summer and notes the university has recently switched elevator maintenance and repair companies to TK Elevator corporation.

Despite these efforts, students still report various issues with campus elevators, ranging from cleanliness to accessibility concerns.

"This is home for a lot of people, including me," English and interdisciplinary studies major Peter Borzillo, a senior, said. "It's just one piece of a larger puzzle of 'How do we make this place feel more like home for everybody?'"

Schwartz Hall is one of the current elevators where the CO has expired. Gleason said residential buildings are given priority on needs rankings.

"The typical experience is that if more than three people are in, it shudders at the third floor," Borzillo said, "and gets stuck there pretty often, too."

Biology major Craig Huydic, a junior, said he experienced just that when he was bringing his belongings up with the large move-in bins.

"Now, mind you this thing is pretty full. It goes up, and then it stops, and we kinda shake a little bit," Huydic said.

Communication disorders major Ashley Donahue, a sophomore, said she was trapped in Chase Hall's elevator for five minutes.

"It was very scary; we had to press the emergency call button to dispatch the police. It was a whole thing with the police, too, where we had to argue with them about which car we were in. Like, I should know, I just got stuck in it," Donahue said.

University Police Chief Makiem Miller said that they respond to elevator emergencies.

"We would then make contact with the fire department if the door needs to be extracted open," Miller said.

Business information systems major Jose Mandujano, a senior, uses campus elevators two to three times a day.

"When I lived in North Campus, the elevators were frequently out of service, and I had to walk up six floors," Mandujano said.

Nursing major and RA in Chase Hall Matt Cabahug, a sophomore, says it's also an accessibility issue, as people with mobility issues could get stuck and not be able to move throughout the building.

"For all the funding we're giving this school, I feel like some things should be a priority," Cabahug said. "Fast transportation between floors should also be safe."

The parking garage elevators are some of the worst, according to Donahue, who usually parks in Wintergreen Garage.

"It's very dirty. There's cracks in the windows, and when you go up and down you can hear the mechanic parts struggling," Donahue said.

Gleason said a plan to update the elevators is in the works, with Wintergreen Parking Garage scheduled for this winter.

Nursing major Brooke Tavares, a sophomore, summed up the sentiment shared by many students.

"It's about feeling safe," Tavares said. "In some buildings, I don't even think twice about taking the stairs. If I don't feel safe, there's no chance I'm stepping inside."

Since the story's release, Gleason said that the COs have been updated. If there are any that are found to be expired, Gleason asks that a work order is submitted.



PHOTO | ROSELYNMARTIN S. ILO

Engleman Hall elevator, taken on Sept. 5, opposite the Bagel Wagon.



PHOTO| KAHIONA SENIOR

Wintergreen Garage elevator, taken on Nov. 12.

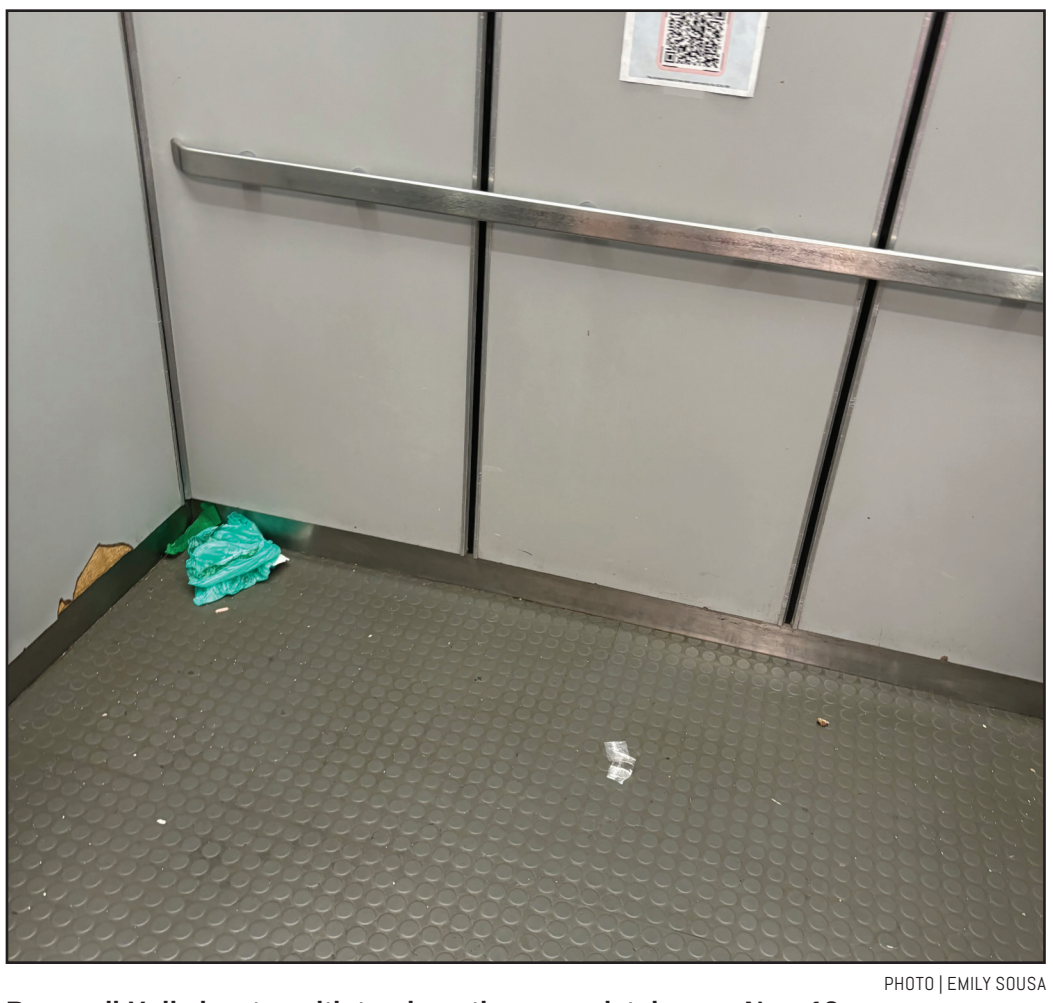


PHOTO | EMILY SOUSA

Brownell Hall elevator with trash on the ground, taken on Nov. 13.



PHOTO | EMILY SOUSA

An elevator out of service in the Wintergreen Garage, was taken on Nov. 13.