

Otis and the lift

Do you enjoy going in a lift? A lift can whisk you up to the top of a tall building. Next time you go in a lift have a look. Do you see the word OTIS on the lift? When you see that word you can relax. You will be safe. The lift will not fall even if the rope breaks.

Elisha Graves Otis was an American. He was a mechanic. He had not had lessons in mechanics. He taught himself. He knew a lot. He invented many useful things. Most famous of all is his safety lift. Americans like Elisha Graves Otis call a lift an “elevator”. He called his invention the safety elevator.

If the cable of a lift breaks, the lift will fall down. People in the lift will be hurt. Elisha Graves Otis made clamps and springs on his lifts. If the rope broke it would not pull on the springs any more. At once the springs would move the clamps. The clamps would grip the guide rails. The lift would stop. There would not be an accident.

On 23rd October 1853, Elisha Graves Otis sold his first safety lift. After that he did not sell many more. “People have not seen my wonderful lifts,” he thought. “They do not understand how safe they are. I must show them. Then they will buy my lifts.”

A great fair was going to be held. It was not a fun fair. It was a trade fair. At a trade fair merchants show what they have to sell. Many people come to look. If they like what they see, they buy things. The trade fair was a world trade fair. People were going to come from all over the world.

Elisha Graves Otis went to the fair. He set up his lift. Crowds of people came to watch. He got on to the lift. Up went the lift high in the air. Every one could see him up there. “Now,” he shouted, “cut the rope!”

“Oh no!” gasped the crowd. “He will fall!”

But Elisha Graves Otis did not fall. The lift came to a stop. It was a safety lift. He was not hurt. Now everyone understood. Elisha Graves Otis sold many lifts after that. His invention was a success.

