

# **STAIRLIFT BUYERS' GUIDE**

## **10 Tips to get your best value in a stairway chair-lift.**

**by Scott P. Britton, 20 years in the home accessibility industry.**

- 1. Always use a licensed contractor.** In California, anyone performing work valued at more than \$500 must be a licensed contractor. Stairlift installers should carry a C-11 Elevator contractor's license, or at a bare minimum, a D-28 machinery and pumps license. <http://www.cslb.ca.gov/Consumers/CheckTheLicenseFirst.asp>
- 2. Consider your needs.** Are you short, tall, or round? Will the stairlift you choose be well suited for your individual needs? A good contractor will offer a variety of models and/or brands and explain the advantages of each to you.
- 3. If you need a curved lift, buy a curved lift.** Some companies don't sell curved rail stairlifts, and will do their best to sell you straight lifts even if it means compromising your safety. Some people can safely and easily use two separate straight lifts on a split-flight stairway, but some cannot.
- 4. Ask for references.** Speak to someone else who has had a stairlift installed. Ask them if the contractor delivered on-time, as promised, and did a neat, workman-like job. If any repairs were needed, were they quickly corrected?
- 5. Back away from high-pressure sales tactics.** If the sales representative gives you a "today only" price, or too good to be true sales price, it was probably marked down from an inflated price to begin with. There are a few large stairlift companies that use high pressure sales tactics to prey on seniors.
- 6. Shop around.** Get at least two bids. The cheapest bid may not always be the best option, but prices can vary wildly in the stairlift industry. Some companies spend all their money on advertising in the belief that "the first one in gets the job," and pass that expense on to you.
- 7. Get it in writing.** A comprehensive and detailed contract is essential to guaranteeing you get what you pay for and expect.
- 8. Ask who will do the work.** This may seem like a dumb question, but many companies that sell stairlifts aren't really contractors at all and end up paying someone else to install your lift.
- 9. Get the warranty in writing.** Is the *labor* covered in the warranty, or just the parts? What about travel? Who do you call for repairs?
- 10. Prioritize customer service.** Does the company call back promptly? If the company doesn't care enough to respond quickly when you are about to give them thousands of dollars, how quickly will they respond if your lift is broken?