

INTERVIEW GUIDE

3-Step Interview Guide for Elevator Maintenance

A practical framework for interviewing elevator maintenance candidates — technical fit, motivational fit, and culture fit, built around verifying a license and a credential instead of taking a resume at its word.

One framework, ten roles, and a scorecard you can actually compare across candidates.

This guide gives you a consistent 3-step interview framework — technical fit, motivational fit, culture fit — plus role-specific technical questions for the ten positions commercial elevator maintenance contractors recruit for most. Use the general framework for every candidate, then pull the questions for their specific role from the reference section.

Score each step 1-5 as you go. A candidate who's strong on technical fit but weak on culture fit is a different hiring decision than one who's the reverse — the scorecard makes that visible instead of relying on a gut "good interview" feeling.

3-STEP FRAMEWORK

Technical fit. Motivational fit. Culture fit. In that order.

Most interviews in this trade go straight to "tell me about your experience" and never verify anything that's actually checkable. This guide gives you three structured steps, each with real questions, so you leave the interview with actual signal — not just a good feeling.

Step 1 — Technical fit: confirm the license and any QEI credential directly with the issuing board or body, ask equipment- and code-specific questions.

Step 2 — Motivational fit: understand why they're moving and how they handle a bad call.

Step 3 — Culture fit: safety mindset, code-compliance mindset, and how they work with a crew or a building's staff.

STEP 1

Technical fit — verify, don't assume.

Before the interview: confirm the state license directly with the state licensing board, and confirm any QEI credential directly with the certifying body that issued it. Neither is optional in most jurisdictions, and both are checkable in minutes — this eliminates the single most common bad-hire cause in this trade.

Ask in the room:

- "What equipment types have you actually worked on — hydraulic, traction, MRL?" (Listen for specifics, not a generic "all of them.")
- "Have you worked relay-logic controllers, microprocessor-based controllers, or both?"
- "Walk me through how you handle an entrapment or callback outside normal hours." (Listen for a real process and ownership, not a vague answer.)
- "What's the most complex job you've run start to finish?"
- For a modernization candidate: "Walk me through a controller upgrade you completed — including the code-compliance steps, not just the parts swap."
- For a QEI candidate: "How do you handle a contractor pushing back on a failed inspection?"

STEP 2

Motivational fit — why now, and how do they handle friction.

- "What made you start looking?" (A vague answer here is a bigger flag than an honest "the on-call rotation wasn't sustainable.")
- "Do you prefer scheduled maintenance work, callback/service work, or a mix — and why?"
- "Tell me about a call that didn't go the way you expected. What did you do?"
- "What does a bad day on this job look like to you, and what do you do about it?"

Candidates who can talk specifically about how they handle a difficult callback, a tight inspection deadline, or a demanding building manager tend to be far more reliable hires than candidates who only talk in generalities about "hard work."

STEP 3

Culture fit — safety, code compliance, and how they work with a building's staff.

- "Tell me about a safety concern or near-miss you raised on a job. What happened?" (You want someone who speaks up, not someone who says "I've never had one.")
- "How do you handle it when a building manager pushes back on a needed repair or delay?"
- "What's your take on code compliance when it slows the job down?"
- "How do you like to receive feedback from a supervisor or inspector?"

Red flags checklist

- Can't name specific equipment types or controller generations when pressed — only generic terms
- License or QEI credential can't be verified with the issuing board or body, or claims a status that doesn't check out
- Blames every past employer or building for every problem, with no self-reflection
- Dismisses safety or code-compliance questions as "not a big deal"

Score every candidate on the same four dimensions.

DIMENSION	1-2	3	4-5
Technical skill	Can't confirm equipment/controller experience	Confirms basics, vague on complex jobs	Specific on equipment, code, and largest job run
Credential status	License/QEI unverifiable or lapsed	Verifiable but requires follow-up	Active, verified license and/or QEI on the spot
Culture fit	Dismisses safety, blames others	Says the right things generically	Specific safety story, owns mistakes
Trajectory	No interest in credential growth	Open to it, no plan	Actively pursuing QEI or a next step

A candidate scoring 4-5 across the board is a fast yes. A candidate scoring 1-2 on credential status is a no regardless of the other three — a license or QEI credential that doesn't verify isn't a minor issue in this trade, it's a legal one.

Elevator Mechanic / Installer & Elevator Service Technician.

Elevator Mechanic / Installer: "What's the most complex installation you've run, and what equipment type was it?" · "How do you handle a discrepancy between the plans and what's actually in the shaft?"

Elevator Service Technician: "Walk me through your last callback — what was the fault and how did you find it?" · "How do you prioritize when three service calls come in at once?"

QEI-Certified Inspector & Elevator Modernization Technician.

QEI-Certified Inspector: "Walk me through how you document a failed inspection." · "What visual and functional criteria do you check first, and why those?" · "How do you handle a contractor who disputes your findings?"

Elevator Modernization Technician: "Walk me through a controller upgrade you completed, start to finish, including code compliance." · "How do you handle a mismatch between an old relay-logic system and a new microprocessor-based controller during a phased upgrade?"

Escalator Technician & Elevator Maintenance Technician.

Escalator Technician: "What's different about troubleshooting an escalator step chain versus an elevator hoist system?" · "How do you handle a public-safety issue on a live unit in a busy building?"

Elevator Maintenance Technician: "Walk me through your preventive-maintenance checklist on a typical unit." · "How do you decide when a routine maintenance issue needs to become a repair ticket?"

Elevator Project Manager & Elevator Estimator.

Elevator Project Manager: "Tell me about a modernization job where the schedule slipped. What did you do?" · "How do you coordinate with a building's staff and tenants during a multi-week modernization?"

Elevator Estimator: "Walk me through a takeoff on a modernization bid." · "Tell me about a bid you lost and what you learned from the debrief."

Elevator Service Dispatcher / Coordinator & Elevator Controls / Electronics Technician.

Elevator Service Dispatcher / Coordinator: "How do you prioritize an entrapment call against three scheduled maintenance visits?" · "Tell me about a time you had to reroute a technician mid-day. How did you handle it?"

Elevator Controls / Electronics Technician: "What controller platforms have you diagnosed and repaired, not just replaced?" · "Walk me through troubleshooting an intermittent controller fault that doesn't reproduce on demand."

Move fast once verification is done — this pool doesn't wait.

Once you've verified the license and any QEI credential directly with the issuing body, and the candidate scores well across all four scorecard dimensions, don't let the offer sit. In a labor pool this small, a strong, licensed candidate who scored well in your process is very likely known to your competitors too.

If you're building this pipeline continuously rather than per-opening, this is exactly the stage where a standing, credential-verified bench pays for itself — you're not starting the search from zero every time a seat opens.

COMMON INTERVIEW MISTAKES

Four ways this interview goes wrong before it starts.

- **Taking "licensed" or "QEI-certified" at face value.** Verify with the licensing board or certifying body before the interview, not after the offer — this is the single most common source of a bad hire in this trade.
- **Asking only about equipment they've seen, not equipment they've serviced.** "I've worked around traction elevators" and "I've diagnosed and repaired a traction elevator's drive system" are different claims — press for the second one.
- **Skippping the safety and code-compliance conversation because the resume looks strong.** A technically skilled mechanic with a dismissive attitude toward code compliance is still a liability risk.
- **Making the offer slowly.** In a pool this small, a strong licensed candidate rarely stays uncontacted for long. Compress the time between a passing scorecard and an offer.

Build the license and credential check into your process, not into your gut feeling.

Because this trade is licensed and credentialed at a level most commercial trades aren't, the single highest-leverage change most hiring managers can make is a mandatory, documented step: before any offer goes out, someone on your team calls the state licensing board and, if relevant, the QEI certifying body, and records what they confirmed. Treat it as a checklist item, not a judgment call — it removes the temptation to skip it under time pressure.

The eight questions to ask every candidate, regardless of role.

What equipment types have you actually worked on — hydraulic, traction, MRL?

Have you worked relay-logic controllers, microprocessor-based controllers, or both?

Walk me through how you handle an entrapment or callback outside normal hours.

What's the most complex job you've run start to finish?

What made you start looking for something new?

Tell me about a call that didn't go as expected.

Tell me about a safety concern or near-miss you raised.

How do you like to receive feedback from a supervisor or inspector?



Every hire from zero is a **tax** on your team.

My Trade Talent maintains a live, credential-verified pipeline of trades talent on a flat monthly retainer — so open seats fill with qualified people, not guesses.

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