

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office
FLOOR DEBATE

March 29, 2006 LB 489

SENATOR PREISTER: Thank you, Honorable President, friends all. I will make some comments perhaps to some of Senator Jensen's comments in that the flip side of what he said is the importance of having these inspections and having standards. I submit Senator Jensen will likely remember the Butternut Building in Omaha. That Butternut Building caught fire and a historic building that was nearly entirely completed and soon to be inhabited by residents burned to the ground and was completely destroyed. Now why should we have training for uninstallers of elevators? That building burned to the ground because the company that was taking out the old elevator shafts didn't have somebody that was trained well enough. The sparks from the welding machine smoldered and caught fire in that building. It was a very destructive fire. It was about three years later and a second building in the historic Old Market area also burned as it was being renovated. The same scenario was the cause. There was a company hired to take out the old elevator. And as they were welding and using cutting torches to remove that old shaft, the sparks laid there, smoldered in the wood, that night caught on fire, and destroyed another historic building. So when we have these standards, they're important to have on the installation. They're also important to have even on the uninstalling. We had those two prime examples of destroyed buildings by contractors who did not have well-qualified employees taking out these elevators, thus the fires, thus the destroyed historic buildings. That's unfortunate. We need to make sure we have these quality standards. The state itself paid out a claim for a young man who was killed in an elevator because that young man died as a result of the elevator not working properly and the state being found to have some culpability in the loss of that young man's life. We have been working, and Senator Synowiecki and people from the elevator industry, the contractors, the State Department of Labor who oversees the contractor safety inspection programs have worked for a number of years to establish these standards, to set high standards so that we not only don't have loss of property, but we don't have, which we have had, loss of life. I think we have reasonable standards. I think penalties of only misdemeanors, which could be no fine at all, no jail time at all, actually is a very minimal fine. So to say a misdemeanor is pretty heavy-handed, I would view as being very light-handed and view