

Safety Bulletin – Lessons Learned the Hard Way – Lift Safety

Have you ever had a vehicle fall off your lift? Many people believe that vehicle lifts are “foolproof” and that “they have locks that won’t let the vehicle fall”, or, “once you’ve learned how to use a lift, they’re all the same”. Unfortunately, these statements are not true. Vehicles fall off lifts all the time, and sometimes they result in serious injury or even death. The fact is, these lifts often operate as designed, but the employee using the lift makes an error in operating it. Whether it was equipment failure or employee failure, how we respond to this information is critical to prevent recurrence.

Here at VADA, we are working with the Automotive Lift Institute to provide you with the most current and recognized lift safety standards available. The Automotive Lift Institute is the recognized source for development of safety standards for vehicle lifts. The institute has even developed a safety training resource for using these lifts. It is called *Lifting It Right*. We recommend use of this safety training resource for all employees who may have access to automotive lifts in your dealerships. Knowledge is our most powerful “tool”. You need to make sure your employees have the appropriate tools to use lifts safely. To purchase this video, access the Automotive Lift Institute’s website at www.autolift.org.

Tips for Operating Automotive Lifts

Lifting vehicles, of all shapes and sizes, is a dangerous act that happens thousands of times per day in service departments across Virginia. Automotive lifts are designed to perform a specific duty... to lift a vehicle safely, so that technicians can complete their repairs without the fear of being crushed by the vehicle. The automotive lift manufacturers’ have designed these lifts with specialty controls which will operate properly according to the manufacturer’s instructions. What happens, all too often, is that those manufacturers’ guidelines are not always followed as they should be.

Have you ever asked yourself any of the following questions?

- When was the last time your dealership had their lifts inspected?
- Are your employees trained on how to operate the various lifts in your shop? *Hint...*All lifts are not created equal.
- Do your employees understand how lifts must be adjusted for differing vehicle models, shapes, and sizes?
- Are your employees who are not ASC certified permitted to operate lifts? If so, have they been properly trained?
- Are safety tips/warning labels placed on all lifts, in sight of the operating handle?

There are several ways to reduce the risk for accidents involving automotive lifts:

- **Have and Enforce a Disciplinary Policy** – Dealerships should have and enforce a formal disciplinary program that addresses the disabling of automotive lift safeties. It is highly advised that this policy include the option to dismiss employees that disable lift safeties in your dealership.
- **Orientation** - Whenever new employees begin working in your service department, be sure to instruct them on proper use of all types of lifts. Also be sure employees understand the proper setting techniques for lifting differing vehicle models.
- **Lift Authorization** - Employees who are not ASC certified should not be permitted to operate lifts unless they have been properly trained by authorized personnel.
- **Training** - Regularly scheduled safety training should be completed throughout the year on a variety of topics, including lift safety. By training employees on how to use automotive lifts properly, you will promote safety awareness and also prevent damage to vehicles from improper lift use.

All training and orientations should be based on the manufacturers' instructions and the Automotive Lift Institute (ANSI/ALI/ALOIM). Recordkeeping of all orientations and training sessions should be maintained.

- **Inspection and maintenance** – An annually scheduled inspection and maintenance program is very important to maintain a safe and productive lift. ALI certified lift vendors should be used to perform routine maintenance and repairs. Inspection and Maintenance records should be maintained for future reference.
- **Accessibility to Operating Procedures** - The lift manufacturer's operating manual should be accessible at all automotive lifts for reference. Safety rules and warning labels should be posted in sight of the lift's operating handle.

Using employee orientation, training, proper maintenance and repair will help to prevent future lift accidents.

IMPORTANT NOTICE - *The information and suggestions presented by PMA Companies in this risk control document are for your consideration in your loss prevention efforts. They are not intended to be complete or definitive in identifying all hazards associated with your business, preventing workplace accidents, or complying with any safety related or other laws or regulations. You are encouraged to alter the information and suggestions to fit the specific hazards of your business and to have your legal counsel review all of your plans and company policies.*

