

Auto service lift safety

Lifting vehicles has the potential to be one of the most dangerous operations conducted in an auto service shop. Both personal injury and property damage can result from vehicles falling off of lifts. Some basic safeguards need to be in place in an effort to reduce the potential for accidents.

Types of lifts:

Automobile repair equipment can include both basic and specialized automobile lifts, ranging from hand-operated jacks to various types of power-assisted lifts. The power lifts include electrically operated cable or chain drive lifts, as well as more common hydraulic lifts. Whenever possible, workers should use fixed mechanical lifts for raising and repairing vehicles. These devices are far more safe than hand-operated jacks.

Training:

Management should establish procedures to ensure workers are trained on the safe operation of machinery and equipment in the shop, including the use of vehicle lifts and jacks. Management should also establish procedures to require inspections and preventative maintenance be performed on all machinery and equipment routinely. Lockout and tag-out procedures should be strictly followed.

Lift inspections:

All lifts should be visually inspected before each use. Detailed inspections of lifts should be conducted in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. The amount of use and potential misuse should be taken into consideration when conducting inspections. Inspections should determine that all power transmission equipment is properly guarded. Other key equipment to inspect should include, but may not be limited to, belts, pulleys, chains, sprockets, fluid reservoirs, motors, pumps, hoses, wiring and cables.

Hand-operated jacks should be checked routinely for any hydraulic fluid leaks, broken seals, loose components, broken handles, broken or missing wheels or bent parts. The pivot point scissor pins should also be closely examined for wear and condition. Hand-operated jacks should be used only in conjunction with jack stands.

Safety measures:

- Whenever possible, have employees, not customers, drive vehicles into repair bays and onto lift equipment to assure proper placement.
- Customers should not be allowed to remain inside their vehicles while they are being serviced. Customers or employees should never be allowed to get inside the vehicles once they have been lifted or raised into the air.
- Equip lifts with one or more safety locks that are automatically activated when the lift has been raised to the manufacturer's specified height.
- Employees should evaluate whether adequate overhead space is available for oversized vehicles to ensure that adequate clearance exists between the vehicle and the ceiling. On some lifts, a contact bar will prevent damage by automatically stopping the lift at maximum height.

For more information, contact your Allied Insurance Loss Control representative.

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